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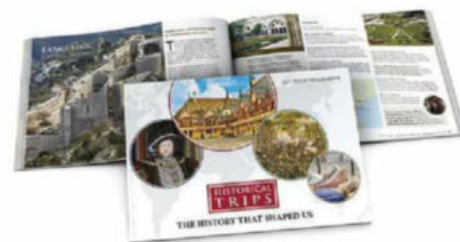


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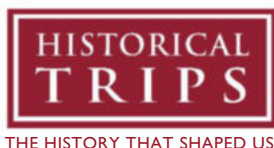


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# WELCOME

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MAGAZINE

“Would you like to live in a **Victorian slum**? For a new BBC Two series, a group of Britons have agreed to do just that – albeit for only a few weeks and in replica 19th-century dwellings. Of course, for the inhabitants of Britain's Victorian cities, slum life was rarely a choice and the conditions they had to endure could be bleak. In this month's cover feature, historian Jerry White explores the underside of Victorian London and looks at how these areas were later transformed. Turn to page 22 for that.

One of the best-known legends from our early history is that of **King Cnut**, forlornly attempting to turn back the waves. On page 40, Eleanor Parker retraces the life and times of this remarkable Viking ruler, whose actions helped precipitate the Norman conquest half a century later.

King Cnut is one of the topics under discussion at our **History Weekend in Winchester**, which is now almost upon us. There are still some tickets available for both this and our later **York event**, so if you're interested in coming along, do check out the details on pages 48–49 and at [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

Finally, the autumn sees students beginning their school and university years. If you, or a member of your family, is planning to study history in the future then I am sure you will find plenty to interest you in the education supplement that's included in the centre of this edition.

## Rob Attar

Editor

BSME Editor of the Year 2015, Special Interest Brand



## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



### Richard J Evans

The most fascinating and at the same time the most challenging part of writing a history of 19th-century Europe was covering unfamiliar topics such as the human impact on the environment and countries new to me like Portugal or Bulgaria.

● *Richard explores the century from Waterloo to the Great War on page 51*



### Eleanor Parker

Cnut was the most successful Viking king, famous for both piety and ruthlessness. I'm fascinated by trying to understand how being part of his Scandinavian empire affected Anglo-Saxon England.

● *Eleanor traces the exploits of a formidable Viking leader on page 40*



### Steven Gunn

It has taken me 30 years and work in more than 60 archives to reconstruct the careers of the 'new men' who ran Henry VII's government. But it has been a fascinating journey!

● *Steven profiles Henry VII's henchmen on page 29*

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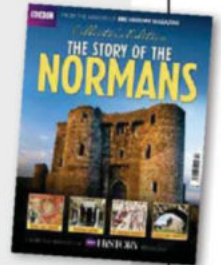
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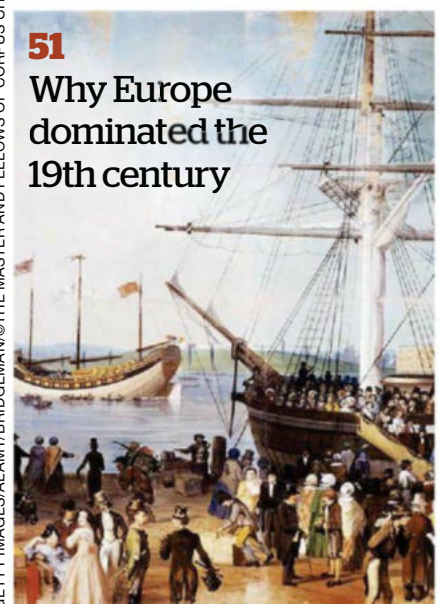
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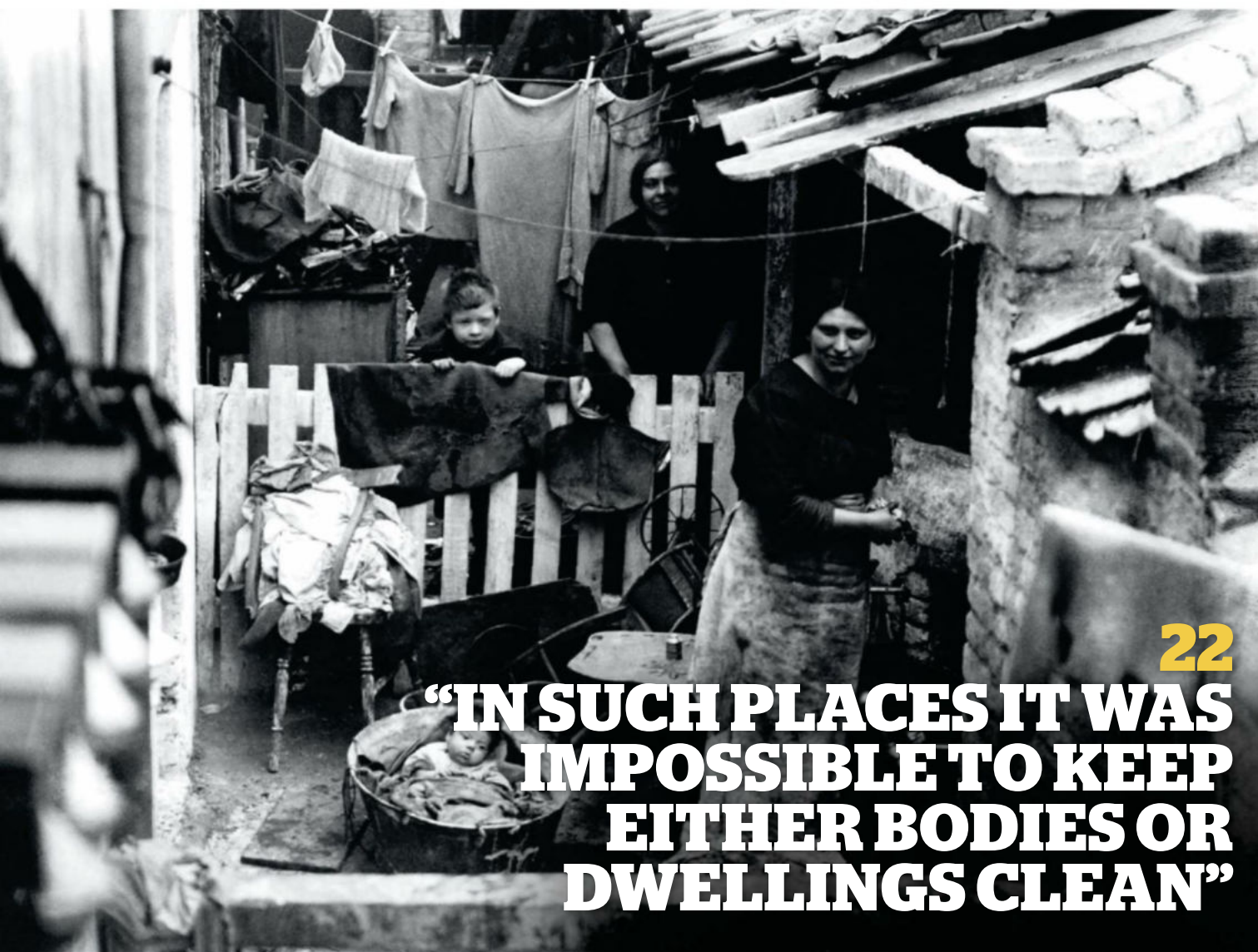
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“IN SUCH PLACES IT WAS  
IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP  
EITHER BODIES OR  
DWELLINGS CLEAN”

**Dominic Sandbrook** highlights events that took place in **October** in history

# ANNIVERSARIES

**1 October 1553**

## Mary I is crowned

*The queen's coronation makes her the first female monarch to reign over England in her own right*

**B**y mid-morning on 1 October 1553 the streets of London were packed. Many spectators must have had sore heads after the parties the day before, but few wanted to miss the chance to see their new queen, Mary – the first woman to ascend to the throne of England unchallenged. Mary's procession reached Westminster Abbey at about 11. The 37-year-old monarch walked beneath a canopy carried by the barons of the Cinque Ports, while her chief magnates carried the sceptre, orb and crown. "Sirs," began the bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, "here present is Mary, rightful and undoubted inheritrix by the laws of God and man to the crown and royal dignity of this realm of England, France and Ireland." Then the crowd roared as one: "God save Queen Mary!"

That Gardiner was presiding told an interesting story. The archbishop of Canterbury would usually have taken charge but the Protestant incumbent, Thomas Cranmer, was in the Tower, accused of treason. As a Catholic monarch in a country caught between conservatism and reform, Mary was in a tricky position. Even the holy oils used for the ceremony were controversial. Having rejected the oils used by her Protestant brother, Edward VI, Mary had ordered new oils from Brussels, which arrived in disappointingly plain vessels.

Yet the day went triumphantly. When her champion, Sir Edward Dymoke, issued the traditional ritual challenge to any man who doubted her claim, there was not a murmur of dissent. That, of course, would come later.



Mary I, shown in a 1554 painting by Hans Eworth, was the first queen to rule unchallenged over England

**20 October 1720**

## Luck runs out for notorious pirate gang

*'Calico Jack' Rackham, Anne Bonny and Mary Read are captured on the orders of the governor of Jamaica*

**O**n the night of 20 October 1720, Jack Rackham's luck ran out. With his black flag showing a skull above two crossed cutlasses, 'Calico Jack' was one of the most wanted men in the Caribbean. A pirate who famously sailed alongside two fierce women, Mary Read and Anne Bonny, Rackham had for weeks been cruising along the coast of Jamaica, attacking fishing vessels with impunity. But on this evening he made his fatal mistake.

Having anchored his ship, the *William*, in Dry Harbour Bay, Rackham spent the evening boozing with his men before falling asleep. He probably never heard Captain Jonathan Barnett's sloop gliding towards him. The first he knew of it was when Barnett shouted out an order to surrender.

Rackham ordered his men to fire, but it was all much too late. Barely had the *William* begun to move off than armed British sailors were swarming aboard. It was all over in moments: according to legend, the only casualty was one of Rackham's men, shot by Mary Read for cowardice in the face of the enemy.

As the British sloop sailed back towards Port Royal, Rackham must have known what was coming. Tried a few weeks later, he was hanged on 18 November and his body displayed on an island known today as Rackham's Cay. Anne Bonny – who, like Mary Read, escaped the noose by revealing that she was pregnant – thought he had only himself to blame. "If he had fought like a man," she reportedly said, "he need not have been hanged like a dog."

BRIDGEMAN



**Dominic Sandbrook** is a historian and presenter. His series about Britain in the 1980s was shown recently on BBC Two



Anne Bonny suffers a wardrobe malfunction in an 18th-century engraving. She found notoriety as a female pirate who sailed with 'Calico Jack' Rackham



**17 October 1860**

At Prestwick, Scotland, **eight golfers contest the world's first major championship**, the Open. It is won by Willie Park Sr (right).



**24 October 1648**

After decades of chaos and bloodshed, central Europe's major powers sign the Treaty of Westphalia, **bringing an end to the Thirty Years' War** in which millions of people had died.



**3 October 52 BC**

In Gaul, the **Arverni chieftain Vercingetorix** (depicted on this coin) **surrenders** to the Roman commander Julius Caesar.



Several months after Louis XVI was executed, his queen Marie Antoinette was guillotined, as depicted in this anonymous contemporary painting. As she climbed to the scaffold she apologised politely for treading on the executioner's toes

**16 October 1793**

## Marie Antoinette is executed

*The French Revolution claims one of its most famous victims*

**O**n her last morning, Marie Antoinette dressed simply in white, and fastened black mourning ribbons to her wrists. Since the execution of her husband, Louis XVI, some nine months earlier, her fate had probably been inevitable. So when, at 10 that morning, the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal entered her cell to pronounce the sentence of death, she was not at all surprised. "This is quite useless," she said simply. "I know the

sentence only too well."

To those who observed her final hours, Marie Antoinette seemed almost unnaturally composed. When, a little later, the executioner Henri Sanson began to cut her hair, she gave a start as the blade touched her neck, but generally she remained astonishingly calm. Even as the cart rattled towards the guillotine, wrote one Victorian historian, she maintained "a grave, resolute look, gazing straight before her, pale,

with red, even blood-shot eyes, but carrying her head high". As she passed, crowds shouted "Austrian bitch!" but she never so much as flinched.

At a quarter past 12 she took her last steps on Earth. On the way up to the guillotine, she accidentally trod on Sanson's toe. "Pardon, monsieur," she politely apologised. Then, moving quickly and professionally, the executioner tied her to the plank, pulled off her neckerchief – and it was done. A heartbeat later, Sanson raised her severed head to show the crowd. The revolution had claimed one of its most famous victims, and certainly its most romantic.

Marie Antoinette's corpse was thrown into an unmarked grave. Exhumed after the fall of Napoleon, her body is now buried in the basilica of St Denis, alongside that of her husband.

GETTY IMAGES/MARY EVANS



25 October 1924

## 'Zinoviev letter' story derails Labour's election hopes

Britain shocked by 'revolution plot' revealed in the Mail

The mid-1920s was a febrile time in politics. After the fall of the Lloyd George coalition, a short-lived Tory government had given way to Ramsay MacDonald's similarly fleeting Labour administration, the first in Britain's history. By October, voters were once more poised to go to the polls. Beneath the surface simmered the fear of war and chaos, Bolshevism and revolution.

It was in this atmosphere that, on 25 October 1924, the fiercely conservative *Daily Mail* broke an extraordinary story. "CIVIL WAR PLOT BY SOCIALISTS' MASTERS" screamed the headline. "Moscow Orders to Our Reds – Great Plot Disclosed Yesterday – 'Paralyse the Army and Navy' – And Mr MacDonald Would Lend Russia Our Money!" The *Mail* explained that it had obtained a letter, allegedly written by the



The 'Zinoviev letter' was revealed by the *Daily Mail* four days before Britain went to the polls. Playing on people's fear of Bolshevism, it is thought to have contributed to Labour's defeat

head of the Comintern (the international communist organisation), Grigory Zinoviev, to a British contact. Just months earlier MacDonald had officially recognised the Soviet government, to the fury of his more conservative critics. The letter seemed to cast his decision in a new and damning light.

"A settlement of relations between the two countries," the letter ran, "will assist in the revolutionising of the international and British proletariat not less

than a successful rising in any of the working districts of England, as the establishment of close contact between the British and Russian proletariat... will make it possible for us to extend and develop the propaganda of ideas of Leninism in England."

The letter was, in fact, a forgery. But who knew that at the time? Four days later, Britain went to the polls, Labour was defeated – and for decades supporters blamed the 'Zinoviev letter'. ■

### COMMENT / SA Smith

"The letter, which may or may not have fooled MI6, was a clever forgery"

Having won the Russian Civil War against the Whites in 1920, the Bolsheviks found themselves isolated in a world dominated by capitalist powers. Meanwhile, White groups in exile sought to destabilise the Soviet government, not least by selling real and fabricated intelligence to western governments in the hope that this would harden their hostility to the socialist state. Soviet external relations were caught between the need to engage in conventional diplomacy to overcome political isolation and establish trade deals, and a desire to extend international socialism. In 1919 the Bolsheviks had established the Comintern to

promote international revolution, under Zinoviev, Lenin's most loyal lieutenant.

By 1924 optimism about the prospects for revolution had receded and conventional diplomacy had the upper hand. In the UK Soviet energies were focused on securing a trade deal with the new Labour government, so it was unlikely Zinoviev would have risked issuing a letter that would jeopardise this. But the fear that the Soviets were fomenting revolution was not irrational, since a leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain was then under arrest for inciting troops to mutiny. The letter, which may or may not have fooled MI6, was a clever

forgery by a White émigré, who understood the tension at the heart of Soviet foreign policy and the uncertainties this provoked in western governments.



SA (Steve) Smith is a senior research fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. His latest book, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890 to 1928*, will be published by OUP early in 2017



# THE TUDORS

## AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE

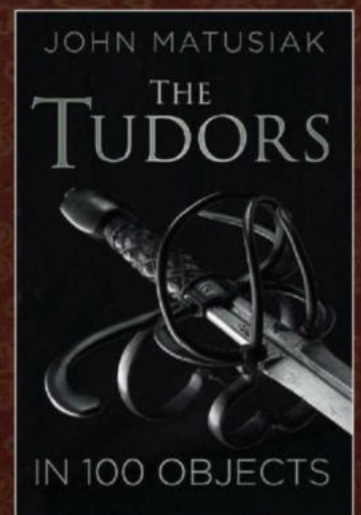


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## Ground to a halt

A tank ditched in a German trench at Cambrai. Despite many successes, the British offensive was hampered by PoWs' loose tongues, new research has revealed



## Aggrieved PoWs betrayed plans for the Cambrai attack

By forewarning the Germans of the forthcoming offensive, British Army soldiers may have changed the course of a major First World War battle.

By **Rob Attar**

**T**he first mass tank attack in history was severely compromised because British Army prisoners of war disclosed vital information to their German captors. And they appear to have done so in response to British actions in Ireland at the time of the Easter Rising.

These are the findings of the historian and author John Taylor who has been exploring German records relating to the 1917 battle of Cambrai for his forthcoming book *Deborah and the*

*War of the Tanks* (Pen & Sword, 2016).

On 18 November 1917, six soldiers from the 36th (Ulster) Division were captured by German forces in a night raid, in a section of northern France where British empire forces were preparing for the battle of Cambrai. Thus far, the British had managed to keep the upcoming offensive a secret, but during questioning, some of the prisoners divulged details of the attack, including the stockpiling of weapons, the arrival of new troops and the presence of tanks. The



**Source of the leak?** Four of the captured soldiers from the 36th (Ulster) Division, along with two of their captors. A German report noted that among many Irishmen in the division: “A great animosity prevails towards England”

prisoners also revealed the planned date and time of the attack.

Taylor can find no evidence for this information being extracted from the prisoners under duress. Instead, the German interrogation report indicates that this betrayal was the result of bitterness towards their superiors and the British in general. The PoWs were angry at being stationed in a vulnerable part of no man’s land. But another major motivation for some of the PoWs was the political situation in Ireland, following the Easter Rising. “A great animosity prevails towards England, with no interest whatever in her war aims,” notes the interrogation report. “They [prisoners] say if an uprising takes place in Ireland, they would take up arms against England without more ado.”

As Taylor is keen to point out, it cannot be proven which of the six PoWs are being referred to here. However, he has identified two likely candidates, who were both Irish Catholics and had more reason to harbour a resentment about events in Ireland. The other four captives were either English or Irish Protestant loyalists.

Taylor’s research also shows the

“Some people were killed, and many tanks destroyed, as a result of the information they gave away”

disclosures’ impact on the battle of Cambrai. In light of the PoWs’ warnings, the Germans reinforced their defensive positions prior to the British attack of 20 November. This did not prevent the initial offensive – the first ever to be spearheaded by hundreds of tanks – from gaining unprecedented successes, but it did mean that the attack was held up in one vital area, the hilltop village of Flesquières. “Because Flesquières wasn’t taken, the cavalry couldn’t go through there, the key Bourlon ridge wasn’t taken on the first day, and the whole operation eventually ran out of steam,” Taylor says. “It wasn’t the only setback, but what happened at Flesquières was crucial and I’ve been able to show that the betrayal of information was key to the Germans being able to repel that attack. It really did change the course of history.”

There was also a human cost to the prisoners’ revelations. “They endangered their comrades,” says Taylor. “Some people were undoubtedly killed, and many tanks destroyed, as a direct result of the information they gave away.”

Although the full details of the PoWs’ betrayal have only now come to light, the British authorities were aware that the prisoners had passed information to the Germans. Yet after the war, no action was taken against the men – all of whom survived the conflict. Taylor thinks that this may be due to the “enormous demobilisation” that had to be negotiated by the authorities, meaning “there may not have been an appetite or the facility” to punish the former PoWs.

## WHAT WE’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

### Tintagel boasts an ancient royal site

Archaeologists have discovered metre-thick walls at Tintagel Castle in Cornwall, suggesting that it could have been a royal residence in the sixth century AD. These walls form part of a dense complex of buildings that may have been the centre of the ancient kingdom of Dumnonia. Other finds, in the first excavation of a five-year English Heritage project, include pottery from the eastern Mediterranean and tableware from the west coast of Turkey.

### Himmler’s diaries shed new light on SS chief

New details are emerging from the Second World War journals of Nazi SS chief Heinrich Himmler, which were recently found in a defence ministry archive in the Russian town of Podolsk. The diaries, which date from 1938, 1943 and 1944, juxtapose the mundane with the horrific. One entry describes how Himmler had a massage before ordering the execution of 10 Polish people. Another details a snack he ate while visiting Buchenwald concentration camp.

### A portrait of Elizabeth I is now public property

An iconic painting of Elizabeth I now belongs to the British people after an appeal helped raise more than £10m. The so-called ‘Armada portrait’ may have been commissioned by Sir Francis Drake. A record number of donors contributed to the cost of the painting, which will be displayed at the reopening of the Queen’s House in Greenwich on 11 October.



The ‘Armada portrait’ appeal raised more than £10m



## BEDTIME ROUTINES

# The perils of sleeping in early modern England

Dark forces were thought to haunt those who practised bad habits at bedtime, as **Ellie Cawthorne** reports

**S**truggling to get your eight hours every night? Tossing and turning in bed? Then, if our early modern ancestors are to be believed, you could be exposing yourself to a multitude of dangers, from paralysis to a visitation by evil spirits.

This is the finding of a new book by historian Dr Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England* (Yale University Press, 2016). Drawing on diaries, letters, advice manuals, sermons and images, Handley's research has found that sleep was a source of major concern at the time. "Peaceful sleep was cherished as an unparalleled natural refreshment for body and mind," she says. "It was judged to be essential for physical and mental health, economic prosperity and personal reputation."

Medical advisers were keen to advocate the health benefits of good sleep, which, according to a popular 1539 health guide, could make "the body fatter, the mynde more quiete and clere" and "the humours temperate". What's more, a good night's sleep was also seen as a way to secure spiritual wellbeing. "Well-disciplined sleeping habits were a practical way of showing that you were a good Christian," says Handley. Too much sleep was a sign of sloth, while too little sinfully damaged the body.

Yet sleep was also plagued by risks. It was seen as a state in which the natural and supernatural worlds collided and the devil was inclined to prey on the unconscious. Horrors awaited those who slept flat on their backs, which, sleepers were warned, could flood their brain with fluid. This could trigger

nightmares, and even herald the visitation of an 'incubus', a malevolent spirit who sat on its victim's chest and paralysed him or her.

A complex jigsaw of rituals and habits emerged in the early modern period in order to maximise sleep's benefits and minimise its dangers. Beds were carefully cleaned and arranged, with religious objects and soporific liquids infused with lavender and chamomile kept nearby to aid a safe and restful night. Bedtime routines were also closely monitored: night-time prayers were encouraged, while habits that could disturb sleep quality, such as consuming rich food or alcohol before bed, were warned against. Sleepers were encouraged to lie with their head raised (to prevent the accidental regurgitation of food during the night) on their right-hand side, before later turning

**Sleeping on your back heralded the visitation of an 'incubus', an evil spirit that paralysed its victims**



**Nightmare scenario**

An incubus haunts a sleeping woman in Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting *The Nightmare*

onto the left to release stomach vapours and aid digestion.

Another popular routine was 'segmented' sleep patterns. This saw people sleeping in two cycles, separated by a one to two hour period of waking. This time could be used to read, pray, have sex, tackle household chores or even brew beer.

Handley argues that, for all their seemingly strange beliefs about bedtime, early modern people were better equipped to get a good night's rest than we are today – and that's because of the time they invested in regulating sleep. She suggests that in the 21st century, as leisure distractions and technology diminish the value we place on sleep, we could learn some important lessons by reflecting on the habits of earlier times.

"It's interesting how the press and health-care professionals are now looking back to the period – particularly its segmented sleep patterns – as a 'golden age' of sleep," she says. "I hope my research will encourage people to recognise that culture and environment, not just biology, play a critical role in shaping the routines and rituals that surround sleep and impact on its quality." ■



The historians' view...

# What does Brexit mean for British democracy?

The EU referendum marked a watershed not only for Britons' relationship with Europe but also with their own parliament. As Brexit discussions continue, two historians offer their personal takes on the future for Britain's system of government

Interviews by **Chris Bowlby**, a BBC journalist specialising in history

**“In voting to leave the EU, Britons repudiated the judgment of the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, and three-quarters of MPs**

**DR ROBERT SAUNDERS**

**T**he decision to leave the EU, on 23 June 2016, struck British politics like an earthquake at sea. Within days a tidal wave had swept through the political establishment, devastating a settlement established just a year earlier at the general election. With one vote, the electorate had overturned the central principle of foreign and economic policy since the 1960s, toppling the prime minister and igniting a civil war within the Labour party.

Scrambling for a precedent, historians compared what had happened to the collapse of the British empire or the failure of the Munich Agreement. Yet a better analogy might have been the 'Crisis of Parliaments', the period between 1509 and 1660 when England's parliament was rocked by the Reformation and the Civil War. For what

happened was *both* an assertion of national identity – embodied in Boris Johnson's call to make 23 June “our country's independence day” – *and* a rebellion against its parliamentary establishment: repudiating the very institution that has historically been the symbol of national sovereignty.

Popular histories of England (and subsequently Britain) tend to deploy one of two narrative devices. One is the 'island story': a tale of resistance against continental incursions. The other is the rise of parliament, defending 'the freeborn Englishman' against kings, princes and 'elites'. Since at least the English Reformation – that first great declaration of national independence – those two stories have marched largely in step, with parliament as the symbol of British exceptionalism. In the 19th century, it was parliament that was thought to distinguish Britain from continental regimes. In the 20th century, parliament survived the age of European dictators. When the UK held its first referendum on the EEC, in 1975, Enoch Powell believed that it was precisely because the British were so resolutely parliamentary that they could never be truly 'European'.

Brexit has peeled those narratives apart, for the decision to leave the European Union came in an assertion of plebiscitary democracy – once derided as a continental practice – over the judgment of parliament. In voting to leave the EU, the electorate repudiated the judgment of the prime minister, the leader of

the opposition, four-fifths of the cabinet and three-quarters of MPs. In this respect, the injunction to “take back control” was directed as much against ‘elites’ at Westminster as ‘bureaucrats’ in Brussels. That MPs could have been so out of kilter with the views of the electorate raises serious questions about the health and viability of our representative institutions.

Brexit was only the most visible sign of a historic loss of faith in parliament. When David Cameron resigned on 24 June, only the unexpected immolation of Andrea Leadsom prevented Britain having its first directly elected prime minister: chosen, not by MPs, but by 150,000 Conservative party members. Since 2015, the leader of the opposition has been imposed on the Parliamentary Labour Party by activists outside parliament, despite the open hostility of MPs.

In this respect, Brexit is both a symptom and a cause of something bigger: an assertion of British exceptionalism that rejects its exceptional institution. That paradox will have consequences, not only for our own times, but for the new histories that must be written of Britain's troubled relationship with the EU.



**Dr Robert Saunders** is a lecturer in modern British history at Queen Mary University of London



Dark clouds gather over the Houses of Parliament. “The decision to leave the EU struck British politics like an earthquake at sea,” says historian Robert Saunders





“The British constitution is generally considered to be bomb-proof. It is built to encourage majority government and slow, considered reform

**DR VICTORIA HONEYMAN**

One of the most striking results of the EU referendum has been the disintegration of the Labour party. Labour performs a key role within British constitutional arrangements – it is the official opposition, there to create an alternative government and hold the current government to account. In the past couple of years, the party has descended into chaos, riven with divisions and personal attacks. This battle for Labour’s soul has been fought many times before. The outcome has always favoured the moderates, although the leftwing has won battles along the way. But how do these battles impact on the British political system and the nation’s constitutional arrangements?

The British constitution is generally considered to be bomb-proof. It is built to encourage majority government and

considered, slow reform. It favours large parties in the centre of the political spectrum, and actively works against smaller parties, as UKIP’s performance in the 2015 general election – when 3.8 million votes garnered the party just one MP – made abundantly clear.

At first glance, life on the opposition benches looks somewhat easier than life on the government benches. It is always easier to criticise the policies put forward by others than to create them and the main task of an opposition is criticism of the government. With a strong, vital leader – such as Harold Wilson, Tony Blair and David Cameron from 1963, 1994 and 2005 respectively – opposition parties can begin to look like a government in waiting. This does not always guarantee them electoral victory – let alone a large majority – but a formidable opposition party with a charismatic leader can get the wind in their sails.

Returning to the opposition benches often brings with it internal party strife and recriminations over failure in government or poor performances during election campaigns. The period between 1997 and 2005, when the Conservatives were on the opposition benches under William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard, are best characterised as being unsettled and unhappy. The party waged war on itself, allowing Tony Blair a largely open field, buoyed by his huge majority. The opposition



Jeremy Corbyn (left) and Owen Smith lock horns during the first Labour leadership debate, Cardiff, 4 August



An illustration shows Oliver Cromwell ejecting the rump of the Long Parliament from the House of Commons

benches between 1951 and 1964 were equally unhappy, with the Labour party facing defeat upon defeat at the hands of successive Conservative party leaders. At the same time, internal arguments raged within the party over what Labour should look like in the postwar period. These disputes returned in the 1980s and are being played out again now.

For Labour, these splits have always existed, but strong party leaders and the sheer desire to win elections have often papered them over. Not in 2016. The Conservatives have, with ruthless efficiency, elected a new leader within the parliamentary party, removing the need for a public battle in the constituencies. Meanwhile, Labour has entered a long period of internal electioneering, displaying its wounds for all to see. **II**



**Dr Victoria Honeyman** is a lecturer in British politics at the University of Leeds

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOKS

- **The British Constitution: A Very Short Introduction** by Martin Loughlin (OUP, 2013)
- **Democracy: A Life** by Paul Cartledge (OUP, 2016)



**OLD NEWS***Umbrella thieves appear in court to howls of derision***Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper**  
**30 October 1892**

**L**ambeth police court was treated to a most unusual sight in the 1890s. Standing in the dock were Fredrick and Emily Hampton, fishmongers, who were charged with the theft of a silk umbrella, valued at 7s 6d (around £36 in today's money). The umbrella belonged to Louisa Squires, who lived in Vauxhall, a well-known middle class area of London the tim

On the evening of 15 October, Louisa had been walking along the Kennington Park Road, when she saw "a horse and cart coming towards her followed by a dog". Suddenly, the dog seized hold of her umbrella, and pulled it with such force that Louisa was forced to let go, and the dog ran off following the horse and cart. Not long after this, the Hamptons were arrested in Elephant and Castle. The police officer had noticed the trap minded by a drunk Mr Hampton. On searching it, he found seven other silk umbrellas, which Mrs Hampton confessed had also been snatched by their dog, a liver-coloured retriever. The dog stood in the corridor of the court, howling for the entire duration of the trial.

News story sourced from *britishnewspaper archive.co.uk* and rediscovered by

**Fern Riddell.** Fern regularly appears on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking*

**PAST NOTES**  
CYCLING

One of German inventor Karl Drais' pioneering pedal-less bikes

Following Britain's domination of the Olympic velodrome, **Julian Humphrys** looks at the early history of cycling

**Who invented the bicycle?**

German inventor Karl Drais has that honour, although the machine he invented in 1817 had no pedals. Scotland's Kirkpatrick Macmillan is often credited with being the first to add them and he's said to have proved their worth by cycling 68 miles to Glasgow in 1842. By the 1860s firms like France's Michaux company were producing machines with pedals, known as 'boneshakers' because of their iron-rimmed wheels.

**What's the story behind the penny-farthing?**

Until gearing was developed, the only way to make a bike go faster (other than pedalling more quickly) was to make the front wheel bigger. By the 1870s young men perched on bikes with front wheels of up to 5 feet in diameter were a common sight. The 'penny-farthing' nickname comes from the fact that, from the side, they looked like the two coins, although at the time they were usually known as 'high-wheelers' or 'ordinaries'. They weren't easy to ride, and if you fell off it was a long way down...

**What made cycling popular?**

With wheels of equal size and a chain that drove the bike from the rear

wheel, Starley's 'safety bicycle' of 1885 made cycling less dangerous. Three years later, John Dunlop's pneumatic rubber tyre also made it more comfortable. Cycling was no longer the preserve of the young daredevil and, once mass-production made bicycles cheaper, its popularity spread rapidly.

**When did bicycle racing begin?**

The first recorded meeting was held at St-Cloud, Paris in 1868. English-born James Moore won the 1,200 metre race and the following year he showed his versatility by winning a 123km road event from Paris to Rouen.

**How about the Tour de France?**

It was first staged in 1903 to promote the French newspaper *L'Auto* (the yellow jersey worn by the race leader is a nod to the colour of the paper) and was won by Maurice Garin. The tour has had its controversies over the years but nothing compares to the 1904 event. Garin was one of a number of competitors disqualified for cheating in a race that featured sabotage, attacks on cyclists, and claims that some riders even travelled parts of the course by train. **II**

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES

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# LETTERS

## Xuanzang's passage to India

### LETTER OF THE MONTH

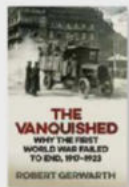
In *Ancient Encounters* (August) an illustration was included of Xuanzang in the 'Chinese travellers in India' section. However, I would have liked him to have been discussed in the text as well.

Xuanzang was a very interesting figure. He left China in 629 and arrived in India in 630. He then left India in 643 and arrived back in Xian, China in 645. In Xian it is claimed that the documents he brought back were translated in the city's Great Goose Pagoda. His travels also formed the basis of *The Journey to the West*, one of the four classical Chinese books.

According to this text, his companions were the Monkey King (Sun Wukong), Pig Face (Zhu Bajie) and the Monk (Sha Wujing). Some readers may have seen the rather offbeat televising of the book, which has been shown on UK television as *Monkey*.

**John Grove, Dronfield**

● We reward the letter of the month writer with our 'History Choice' book of the month. This issue it is *The Vanquished* by Robert Gerwarth. Read the review on page 69



Chinese Buddhist Xuanzang travelled to India and back, and inspired the "offbeat" TV show *Monkey*, writes John Grove

### There's more to say on the EU

The essay by Professor Tombs on *The Reluctant Europeans* (September) would have given a more complete and rounded picture of the UK's sojourn in the EEC/EU with the addition of just a few words to two sentences. He pointed out that, despite the pessimism of the 1970s "... rather than disappearing from the international scene Britain has remained one of the world's half-dozen or so most powerful and internationally active states..." The addition of the words "while a member of the EU" would avoid giving the impression that this would have been the case even had we chosen to remain isolated over that period, something that could only be surmised in the realm of counterfactual imagining.

It would avoid any similar confusion to make an addition to the sentence: "When measured over the whole of the half-

century from 1950 to 2000, it is clear that Britain's economic performance was no different from the European norm." To this should be added: "Although whether or not that would have been the case had the UK not joined the EU must remain a matter for conjecture."

**Alastair Walker, Bangor, N Ireland**

### Was de Gaulle right all along?

The excellent article by Professor Robert Tombs clearly shows how the arrogant and ignorant political class of the 60s and 70s misled the British people about the true nature of the European project and led them to believe that it was necessary to remain participants.

General de Gaulle was right and knew more about the real interests of our people than did those supposedly tasked with representing them. As an activist for the No campaign in 1975, I remember

how we were accused of being either knaves or fools and it has taken more than 40 years for us to have been proved correct. It is a tragedy that the real strengths of our economy in so many fields were sacrificed by self-interested politicians but, now we are free of the EU, we can reverse the position by returning to the path we should never have left: of being an independent, democratic and sovereign nation.

**Colin Bullen, Kent**

### Six years and out

I was intrigued to read the assessment of David Cameron's legacy as prime minister in the article *Why Has Britain Decided to Leave the EU?* (August).

It occurred to me that a remarkable number of British prime ministers have now had six-year premierships, whether or not they went on to serve their nation again. David Cameron (2010–16) faithfully follows in the footsteps of postwar prime ministers Harold Macmillan (1957–63) and Clement Attlee (1945–51).

They, in turn, could reflect on the multiple achievements of their illustrious predecessors: David Lloyd George (1916–22), the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (1886–92), Benjamin Disraeli (1874–80), William Ewart Gladstone (1868–74), the 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1859–65), Lord John Russell (1846–52), and the 2nd Viscount Melbourne (1835–41).

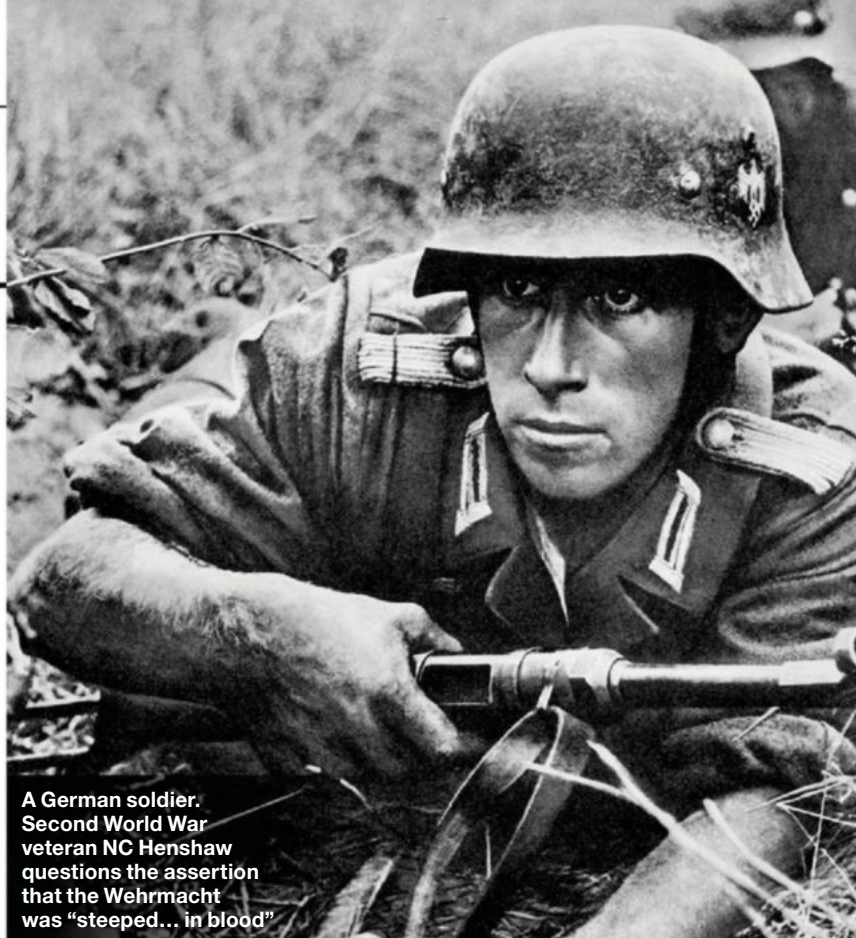
**Godfrey H Holmes, Withernsea**

### The missing Midlands

In Rob Attar's interview with Melvyn Bragg (*England's Northern Soul*, September), comparisons were made between the north and the south of England, but not a single mention of that bit in between – the Midlands.

Birthplace of Shakespeare and home of current Premiership football champions Leicester City, the Midlands has its own history, identity and importance. What about Wedgwood, the Black Country and Offa's Dyke?

At least Julian D Richards and Dawn Hadley filled in the gap on the map (*The Great Viking Terror*, September), clearly showing Offa's kingdom of Mercia not only bordering Wales but well and truly



A German soldier. Second World War veteran NC Henshaw questions the assertion that the Wehrmacht was “steeped... in blood”

at the centre of Anglo-Saxon England.  
**Suzan Lindsay Randle, London**

### The kindness of strangers

Regarding Nigel Jones’s review of Ben H Shepherd’s *Hitler’s Soldiers* (Books, August), I have great difficulty accepting the suggestion that the soldiers of the Wehrmacht were “steeped... in blood”. As someone who fought on the beaches of Normandy and was exposed to heavy German fire, I was aware that the German soldiers were doing the job they were ordered and trained to do, and the possibility that they were the same as ourselves.

A few months before the end of the war we were based in a small village near Osnabrück, Germany. The residents were exceptionally kind to us. Two German boys offered to send our washing to their parents and later on they invited us to meet them. Eventually, we were introduced to their father, an officer in a Panzer regiment who had just been demobbed. He shook hands with me and we became friends, despite the fact that his hand – or even mine – might have been “steeped... in blood”.

At another time, together with other soldiers in my unit, I was taken to Auschwitz and saw the gas chambers. The most horrible memory I have was seeing the pits of naked bodies: men,

women and even small children. The idea that soldiers participated willingly and even “enthusiastically” – to use the words in the review – in such acts of barbaric savagery, I find difficult to believe.

**NC Henshaw, County Down**

### More family affairs

Iwan Morgan’s article in the July 2016 feature on presidential dynasties (*Backgrounder*) might also have included William Henry Harrison, the ninth president, and his grandson, Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd.

**William L Beigel, California**

### Corrections

● On page 13 of September’s issue (*News*), we captioned an image with the phrase: “Harold heads to Hastings in a section of the Bayeux tapestry.” Reader Joy Temple has written in to point out that the picture actually shows Harold on his way to Bosham.

### WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, while reserving the right to edit them. We may publish your letters on our website. Please include a daytime phone number and, if emailing, a postal address (not for publication). Letters should be no longer than 250 words.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

What you’ve been saying on Twitter and Facebook



**@HistoryExtra: Which do you think was the worst year in history and why?**

**Bryan Priest** Has to be 1914. The cracks and divisions that formed within Europe leading to the horror that was the ‘Great War’ and subsequent loss of lives on an unimaginable scale

**Matthew Lewis** 1348, with the Black Death taking hold and spreading. With no sign of a cure and the indiscriminate deaths of up to a third of populations of all ages, races and ranks, there was widespread terror and loss

**Margaret Fenton** The day Hitler came to power in Germany and so started the events that led to the death of millions of Jews and the Second World War

**Nancyj Jeanne** Worst for England by some measure was 1066 when William and his soldiers invaded and forever changed a way of life

**Elizabeth Fugate** 1231, the year the Inquisition started and people were tortured and burned at the stake for their religious beliefs

**@HistoryExtra: What was your experience of history at high school?**

**@kwilsonlee** Teacher loaned me (age 14) a book on medieval history - “I think you’ll like it”. Uni and a PhD later, am still riveted

**@KatieLBrigder** One history teacher of mine did an excellent job. Incredibly inspirational. Years later I’m nearly in 3rd year of PhD

**@StephEmmaBrown** High school destroyed my love of history. Luckily an evening course put it right and I’m now studying BA history

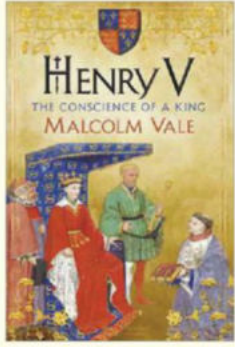
**@CJSTIA11** I was introduced to King Henry VIII at my grandpa’s knee. A BA, teaching and years later the love continues. Thanks Grandpa

**@cath\_fletcher** Dropped history at 13, took it up again in evening class at 25, now do it for a job

**@TinaReher** Blessed with a Dad who took me to museums from a young age & read ALL the texts in the display cases and such for me

**@Aylett1990** My teacher inspired my passion for history. I’m applying for my PhD in New Imperial History

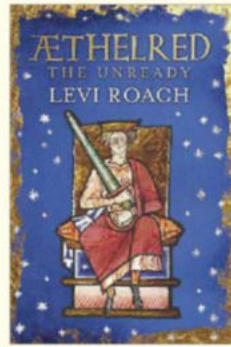




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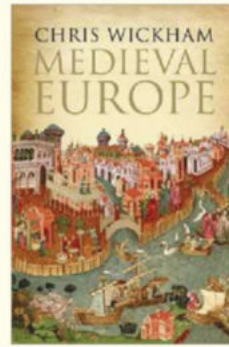
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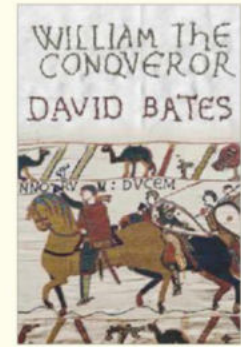
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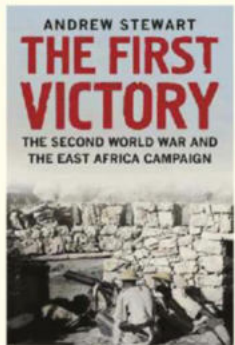
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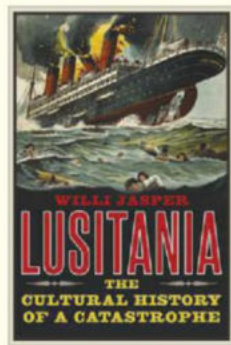
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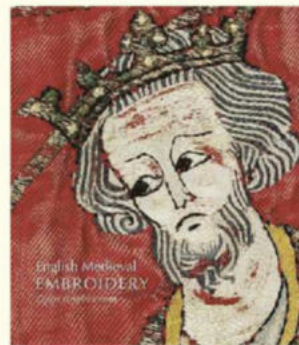
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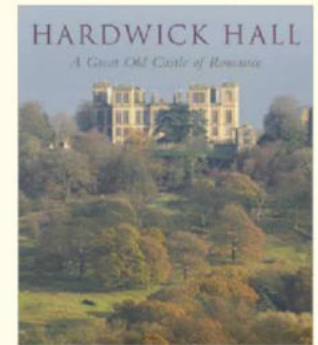
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## Michael Wood on... **The Great Schism**

# “Divisions within religions are growing ever more dangerous”

“I’m sitting at the old refectory table, polished by centuries of use, in the Byzantine monastery of Hozoviotissa on the Greek island of Amorgos, stirring thick sweet coffee made by the monks (with a tot of rakomelo on the side!) Rebuilt by Emperor Alexios Komnenos in 1088, it’s a staggering sight, clinging to the rock a thousand feet up a red cliff. Out of the window, just sea and sky: the primordial separation of creation in the Book of Genesis. Here you can sense one source of the religious impulse found in all human societies.

It was built a few years after the most fateful division in the history of Christianity. Bigger even than the Catholic-Protestant divide, this was the split between the eastern and western churches, sealed in 1054 by reciprocal excommunication: the Great Schism.

Up to the 700s, the churches of east and west were essentially still one. Christianity had begun in the heartland of the eastern Mediterranean. There were divisions – Copts, Armenians, Ethiopians – but for the first few centuries the Christian world was unified. When the conversion of the barbarian Angles and Saxons in the far west ran out of steam in the 600s, Rome would send a Greek archbishop to sort it out: Theodore of Tarsus.

This state of things lasted till the eighth century. Doctrine and practice were directed by ecumenical councils, the last in 787. Then dissensions appear, culminating in Pope Nicholas I (858–67) declaring papal primacy over the Christian world. To easterners this was nothing short of heresy. The very idea of a supreme pontiff was impossible to the orthodox, whose patriarch could decide nothing without the approval of ‘the church’. Even today this remains “the first and most difficult” difference, as one monk explained to me. “It is simply not apostolic.”

There were those in the west, too, who didn’t like it: the great liturgist Hincmar of Reims, for example. But the damage had been done. Disputes also raged about

the words of the Nicene Creed. Agreed in the fourth century by the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, this has remained a fundamental profession of faith for Christians. But now to the phrase: “the Holy Spirit flows from God”, the west added the fateful *filioque*, “and the Son.” For the orthodox, again, this was heresy.

Differences now multiplied in doctrine, ritual and custom. While the Orthodox church saw its task as preserving the apostolic tradition as laid down in the first ecumenical councils, the Catholic church became more and more a converting church, finding its followers among the barbarians, Franks, Goths and Saxons. It employed a carrot and stick approach: for example, formulating a doctrine of Purgatory that was not part of apostolic tradition, nor in Orthodox belief.

So the churches formally split in 1054. In 1204 crusaders would sack Constantinople itself. Surrounded by a hostile Muslim world, the spiritual empire of the eastern church diminished (save in the Slav and Russian worlds), still insisting though that it alone preserved the true Christian tradition. The Catholic church meanwhile would find whole new worlds to convert, sometimes employing persecuting practices that had no parallel in the east. It’s said that a later Byzantine military leader preferred “the Turkish turban” to “the papal tiara”.

The reciprocal excommunications of 1054 were only lifted in 1965, and since the 1980s there have been several attempts to find a meeting of minds. Yet these things are not merely a matter of obscure doctrine. Today we are watching the devastation of eastern Christianity in the lands of its birth. At the same time Russian Orthodoxy is reviving with a muscular evangelism allied to an authoritarian state.

Everywhere in our world, divisions in religion are growing more dangerous, especially – but not only – in Islam. The story of the Great Schism is a reminder of how religions are always reshaped by history. And in history it always helps to get back to the source. ■

**Michael Wood** is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. His latest BBC Two series was *The Story of China*. He is now preparing a film on humanity’s oldest stories



GETTY IMAGES



COVER STORY

# Victorian London homes from

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**On the street**  
A photograph from around 1900 shows recently evicted families surrounded by their belongings. In just over two decades at the end of the 19th century more than 45,000 people were evicted in central London

GETTY IMAGES





# on's m hell

Graphic images of 19th-century slums are familiar to us today. But what were they really like? Why were they built? And how were they cleared? **Jerry White** explores the capital's meanest streets



An 1856 illustration depicts a large family living in one room in Tyndall's Buildings, Holborn. This notorious slum of near-derelict houses around a central court was typical of Victorian labourers' dwellings – old and decrepit, or cheaply built to last only a couple of decades



“Tyndall’s-buildings is a court containing 22 houses... the basement story of nearly all... was filled with fetid refuse, of which it had been the receptacle for years. In some... it seemed scarcely possible that human beings could live: the floors were in holes, the stairs broken down, and the plastering had fallen... In one, the roof had fallen in: it was driven in by a tipsy woman one night, who sought to escape over the tiles from her husband.”

So George Godwin, editor of *The Builder*, described a Holborn court around 1859. He could, as he well knew, have been describing any one of an uncountable number of courts and alleys clustered densely in the old suburbs around the cities of London and Westminster and in the ancient borough of Southwark. Many of these places predated the Great Fire of 1666, or had been cheaply run up since then, with passages cut through houses fronting the streets and leading to courts built on gardens and yards behind.

Some houses consisted of just two rooms, one on top of the other; some were back-to-back with no through ventilation; all shared with neighbouring houses earth-closets built over cesspits, and took their water from a common standpipe. In such places it was impossible to keep either bodies or dwellings clean; it was often easier to defecate in the streets, over gratings or in hidden corners than in the filthy crowded privies of the poor.

Tyndall’s Buildings and their like may have been the archetypal slums of Victorian

London but in fact slums came in many forms. In the early 19th century, as London grew and pressure on house-room increased, any open space – remnants of market gardens, marshy meadows not previously profitable for building, or the grounds of former farmhouses – became valuable terrain for the jerry-builder. These fag-end parcels of London clay would be leased for 21 years or even less, so builders had every incentive to put up hovels that would last no longer than that: without foundations; with dirt floors; with walls just half a brick thick; with yards and streets unpaved and without drains.

Such places were slums as soon as they were built. They might be clustered in large numbers in shanty towns which were sometimes named after the entrepreneur who had first developed the land. In London there was Tomlin’s New Town in Paddington; Agar Town, north of Battle Bridge and today’s King’s Cross; and the Potteries, self-built colonies of potters’, brickmakers’ and pig-keepers’ cottages west of Notting Hill.

“A Village – Not Picturesque,” was how Mary Bayly, an evangelical ‘bible-woman’ active among the poor of North Kensington,

It was impossible to keep bodies clean, and often easier to defecate in the streets than in filthy privies



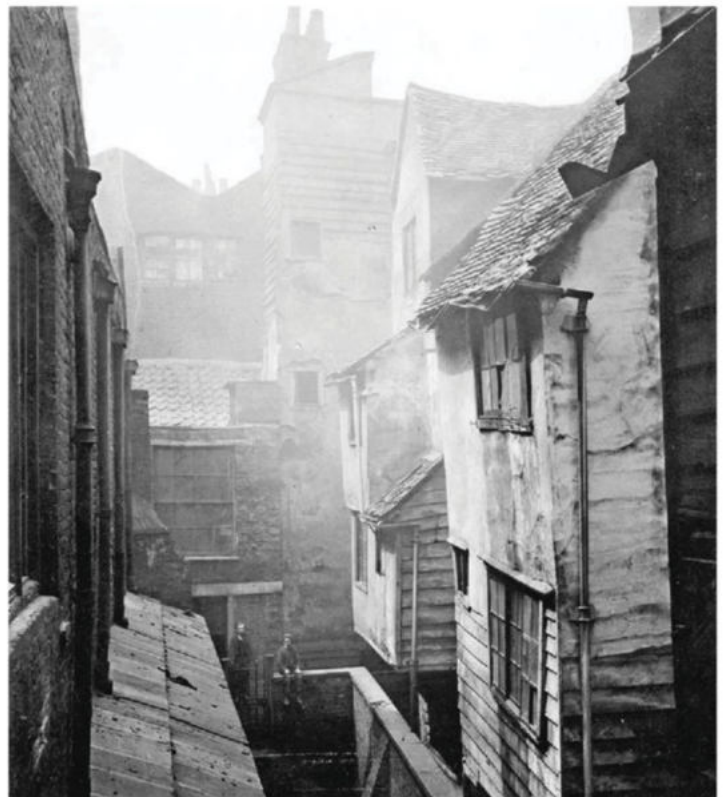
The widening of Shoe Lane in the City of London in 1871 draws a crowd of onlookers. Such road-widening and building schemes had the side-effect of clearing slum districts



described the Potteries in 1859, citing a passage from *Household Words*, Charles Dickens's first weekly magazine, to make her point: "There are foul ditches, open sewers, and defective drains, smelling most offensively... not a drop of clean water can be obtained – all is charged to saturation with putrescent matter. Wells have been sunk on some of the premises, but they have become, in many instances, useless, from organic matter soaking into them. In some of the wells the water is perfectly black and fetid. The paint on the window-frames has become black from the action of the sulphuretted hydrogen gas. Nearly all the inhabitants look unhealthy; the women especially complain of sickness and want of appetite; their eyes are sunken, and their skin shrivelled."

It was to deal with places such as the Potteries and Tyndall's Buildings, in almost every part of built-up London and on all its scabrous margins, that a new London government was established in 1855. London's local vestries, each of which appointed a Medical Officer of Health and sanitary inspectors, would be responsible for public health, while the London-wide Metropolitan Board of Works would take on the tasks of

**RIGHT: Weather-board 17th-century houses in the City of London, pictured in 1877. Such buildings, erected after the time of the Great Fire, were by then in terrible condition**







By the early 20th century, Bangor Street (above left) was one of the most notorious in Notting Dale, described as “semi-criminal and degraded”. Into the 1960s, many houses in this and nearby areas were rented by the room by single men, often poorer immigrants (above, right)

draining London, driving new streets through congested districts and, later, clearing the slums through ‘Improvement Schemes’.

### Remapping with road and rail

There were, though, as many ways of dealing with the slums as there were types of slums themselves. Road-building had long given London’s governors – crown and parliament before 1855, local government thereafter – the excuse and opportunity to rid the metropolis of great nests of troublesome neighbourhoods. Commercial Street was driven along the course of Rose Lane, Spitalfields, around 1840, and a little later New Oxford Street was built through the Irish rookery (‘The Holy Land’) of St Giles in the Fields. Victoria Street cleared part of the ‘Devil’s Acre’ near Westminster Abbey, while Farringdon Road and the underground railway destroyed much of the notorious Field Lane. Even late in the 19th century and into the Edwardian era, the slum-clearance potential of Rosebery Avenue, Clerkenwell, and Kingsway, Holborn were crucial factors when deciding whether public money could be granted for such projects.

Elsewhere railways, those great drivers of London’s prosperity at mid-century, swept away Agar Town; this short-lived shanty of the 1840s was destroyed within two decades for the Midland Railway’s giant warehouses. It is estimated that railway clearances elsewhere in the metropolis, mainly in the 1860s, evicted 56,000 people, most from the poorer working classes. Suburban development by speculative builders also cleared some slums: in this way Tomlin’s New Town

was remodelled out of all recognition by ‘Tyburnia’, north of Hyde Park, in the 1830s.

The slum clearance role of railway schemes was strictly secondary to the commercial needs of the companies, and the primary purpose of road schemes was ostensibly to facilitate London’s constipated traffic flows rather than to dislodge the poor, with their dangers and diseases, from the places they had to call home. It was not until the first official slum clearance measure – the Artizans’ and Labourers’ Dwellings Improvement Act of 1875 – that London government was given a weapon to strike directly at the heart of the city’s unhealthy slums.

Health was the driving force behind this act, though almost everywhere it was the most turbulent districts – long known for crime and disorder even more than for infectious disease and high mortality – that were chosen

to fall to the housebreaker’s hammer. Flower and Dean Street (in the Spitalfields district), Bedfordbury (St Martin-in-the-Fields), Old Pye Street (Westminster), Tabard Street (Southwark) and a host of other districts had long been notorious as criminal haunts, home to large numbers of prostitutes and thieves.

In fact, there were so many potential targets that the Metropolitan Board of Works overreached itself, evicting thousands while the housing associations who should have provided new homes proved unable or unwilling to build, and cleared sites lay empty and undeveloped for years to come. Indeed, by the time of the greatest clearance of all – that for the ‘Jago’, the Boundary Street area of south-west Bethnal Green, in the 1890s – the London County Council, the replacement authority for the discredited Board of Works, decided itself to build working-class housing on the site. By the turn of the 20th century the Boundary Street Estate would become the first great municipal housing venture in London.

### Suburban slums

By that time, however, a new sort of slum had become all too evident. Exuberant building speculations during the three decades following 1845 built a seemingly endless expanse of middle-class housing north of the river, from Pimlico in the west to Dalston in the east. At first there seemed to be a bottomless market for three- and four-storey London properties built in long terraces – but the demand proved illusory. One of the consequences was that product of late-Victorian building: the suburban slum.

In the densely overcrowded streets of Notting Dale, **43 children out of 100 would die** before their first birthday



**Women do washing and watch a baby (in a tin bathtub) in a Shoreditch slum in 1922. Some of London's worst slum dwellings remained intact until the end of the 1930s**

This was much more difficult to deal with than the irredeemably shoddy towns of Agar and Tomlin. These houses were solid enough, and certainly pretentious; they were intended for lower middle-class families, with rooms for one or two servants in the attics and a kitchen in the basement. But they either never found those ideal tenants, or quickly lost them to a host of competing streets nearby. Some of these slums were isolated streets that had lost cachet, such as Sultan Street in Camberwell, Litcham Street in Kentish Town, and Campbell Road in Finsbury Park – later described as “the worst street in north London” – albeit being surrounded by respectable streets.

The slum clearance legislation of 1875 was never designed for houses as generous in size, with dedicated sanitary and washing facilities, and sturdily built to last the full length of a 99-year lease. The problem was not so much the houses themselves but the way they were used. Instead of a single middle-class family in occupation, these properties became ‘tenement houses’ or ‘houses let in lodgings’, with a working-class family on each floor – increasingly, one in every room.

The most troublesome and intractable of these new suburban slums lay next to the Potteries of North Kensington. Notting Dale, built from the early 1860s, absorbed the older district's habits, and corrupted the streets built nearby to the south and west. Notting Dale became known as ‘The West-end Avernus’ or ‘hell on earth’. By 1896 it was ‘home’ to more than 4,000 people. Its houses were densely overcrowded, many occupied by 20 people and

more, often sharing a single toilet. Here, 43 children out of every 100 would die before reaching their first birthday. According to the local authority, though, the houses were far less of a problem than the people, prone especially to “drunkenness” and “inherited disease”. Notting Dale's population was said to be “largely made up of loafers, cab-runners, beggars, tramps, thieves, and prostitutes”.

When, at the end of the 19th century, the social reformer Charles Booth pondered how to deal with the “semi-criminal and degraded” populations of Bangor Street, Crescent Street and the other notorious places of Notting Dale and beyond, he could suggest only that they “be harried out of existence”. Demolishing homes and dispersing ‘savages’ was one way of attempting this – but was easier said than done. Notting Dale would not see significant demolitions until the end of the 1930s, and much of the surrounding district retained its evil reputation for another two decades. Even in the early 1960s, and in a very different London, this part of North Kensington would continue to be known as ‘a troubled area’. **H**

**Jerry White** is professor in history at Birkbeck, University of London, specialising in working-class London life since 1700, and author of *London in the Nineteenth Century* (Jonathan Cape, 2007)

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### TELEVISION

► The new five-part BBC Two series **The Victorian Slum**, showing modern families living in simulated slums, is due to air this autumn.

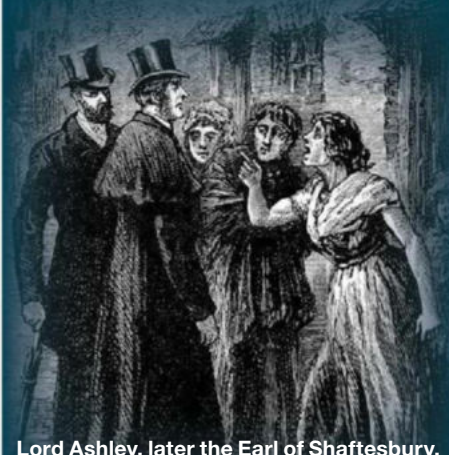


## Slum clearances: evicting the lowly

Between 1878 and 1899, slum clearance schemes in central London led to 45,334 men, women and children being evicted. Those, at least, are the official figures; the real numbers may be much higher, because it was in the slum landlord's interest to evict as many people as he could *before* the official valuation of his property – empty rooms having greater letting potential than houses filled to the rafters. There is no figure for those thus ‘winkled out’, but even the official number is huge – equivalent to the population of Rotherham in the 1890s.

Who were these people? The short answer is: we don't know. The voice of the evicted slum-dweller is, for all practical purposes, silent. Some among them would have been intelligent and articulate, literate and skilled. Most, though, were the nameless poor, who lived large parts of their lives in hunger, cold and semi-nakedness. Perhaps word of mouth told them to stay put for the few shillings of compensation that came their way, but that is all they got. At the end, as the social reformer the Earl of Shaftesbury described in the House of Lords in 1875, when the bailiffs arrived “perplexity and dismay are everywhere; the district has all the air of a town taken by assault”. The slums were not cleared to benefit people like these. They were cleared to get rid of them.

The Metropolitan Board of Works, and its successor, the London County Council, provided or enabled housing associations to provide dwellings for 46,934 persons. On the face of it, that was a small gain. But those new dwellings were never intended for those who had been evicted. The slum dwellers were kept out by rules with which they couldn't comply, and by rents they couldn't afford. So where did they go? It's likely that they melted into neighbouring streets, or moved to congenial ‘slums’ nearby or even farther afield. Only a few score of the 45,000 people evicted ever occupied the new London that replaced their old homes.




**Lord Ashley, later the Earl of Shaftesbury, explores a slum in 1840**



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# Henry VII's brilliant upstarts

In 1485, the first Tudor king did something unusual: he invited a new wave of lowborn henchmen to England's court. What they lacked in breeding, these men made up for in talent. But, says **Steven Gunn**, Henry's meritocracy wasn't popular with all

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH YOUNG, BASED ON  
CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITS WHERE AVAILABLE





In 1497 Perkin Warbeck, the pretender to Henry VII's throne, claimed that the Tudor king had "none in favour and trust about his person" but men "of simple birth", whose advice led him into "misrule and mischief". In some respects, Warbeck – who was hanged by the king after attempting to raise rebellion – was wrong: Henry *did* take counsel from great churchmen and trusted nobles. But, for all that, there was more than a kernel of truth to Warbeck's allegations. Henry was increasingly relying on a group of 'upstart' advisers who had used their considerable skills to rise to the top of the political ladder from comparatively humble origins. And, in doing so, the king was transforming the way his nation was governed.

By their ideas, their actions and their very existence, these men gave Henry's government much of its distinctive and controversial tone as he sought stability in the wake of the civil war that had brought him, a claimant with mere dribbles of royal blood, to the throne.

Many of these new men were lawyers, and stressed the need for the king to secure "good governance and rule" through "true justice", imposing his power through the law on even the greatest of his subjects. They met this aim by relentless work on local commissions of the peace and in the king's council. Many had financial skills, which were useful in developing the machinery by which Henry more than doubled the crown's income over the course of his reign. They raised money from crown lands, customs on trade and more efficient taxes. They helped Henry spend it in ways that enhanced his power: magnificent building and pageantry, diplomatic alliance-building and, when necessary, war.

They had the ruthless skill and the absolute loyalty to the king to enforce his control over those he did not trust. From gaol-keeping and treason trials to the network of financial penalties in which Henry tied up many of his subjects to ensure their obedience, these new men were the agents of the king's control.

What was worse, they prospered while others squirmed. When Henry died in 1509, resentment boiled over. Two of his henchmen, Edmund Dudley and Sir Richard Empson, were arrested and executed. But many of their colleagues remained at the heart of the new regime, working with Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey to build an ever stronger Tudor state.

## 1 The "virtuous" warrior Sir Edward Poynings

Poynings (1459–1521) rose to prominence as a captain among the exiles who put Henry on the throne. He sprang from a disinherited junior branch of a minor noble family, just enough to give him a coat of arms and shaky claims to land.

Poynings' military skills won him repeated commands from the king. In 1492 he took English troops to the Netherlands to help the Habsburgs capture the rebel-held port of Sluis, helping to eliminate raids on English trade and impressing German mercenary captains. In 1494–96 he was in command in Ireland, neutralising support for Henry's Yorkist rivals and expanding English control. There the Earl of Ormond's nephew reckoned him "as good a man as I know".

In 1513 Henry's successor, Henry VIII, put Poynings in charge of Tournai, the king's prize conquest from his first French war. The citizens found him "a virtuous man" who disciplined his troops sternly. His reputation long outlived him, one patriotic author claiming in 1550 that Poynings' "high prowess and worthiness"

was such that if the French had had a hero like him "they would have made of his acts a great book".

Yet Poynings was much more than a soldier. He was an accomplished diplomat, entrusted with five embassies to the Netherlands between 1493 and 1516. As his colleague the future bishop Cuthbert Tunstall put it, by his "wisdom" and "great diligence" he did more to achieve the king's aims than "a far greater personage than he is... could have done". He held high office in the king's household and was powerful in Kent, where he arbitrated local disputes and served as warden of the Cinque Ports.

Poynings died full of honour in 1521 but, like many of the 'new men', his achievement was insecure. His only legitimate son died, many of the lands he had recovered passed away to distant relatives, and he struggled to provide for his three illegitimate sons. Yet the sons all went on to notable military careers and the eldest won a peerage from Henry VIII for his service in the garrison of Boulogne during the ongoing war with the French.





## 2 The ruthless financier

### Sir Henry Wyatt

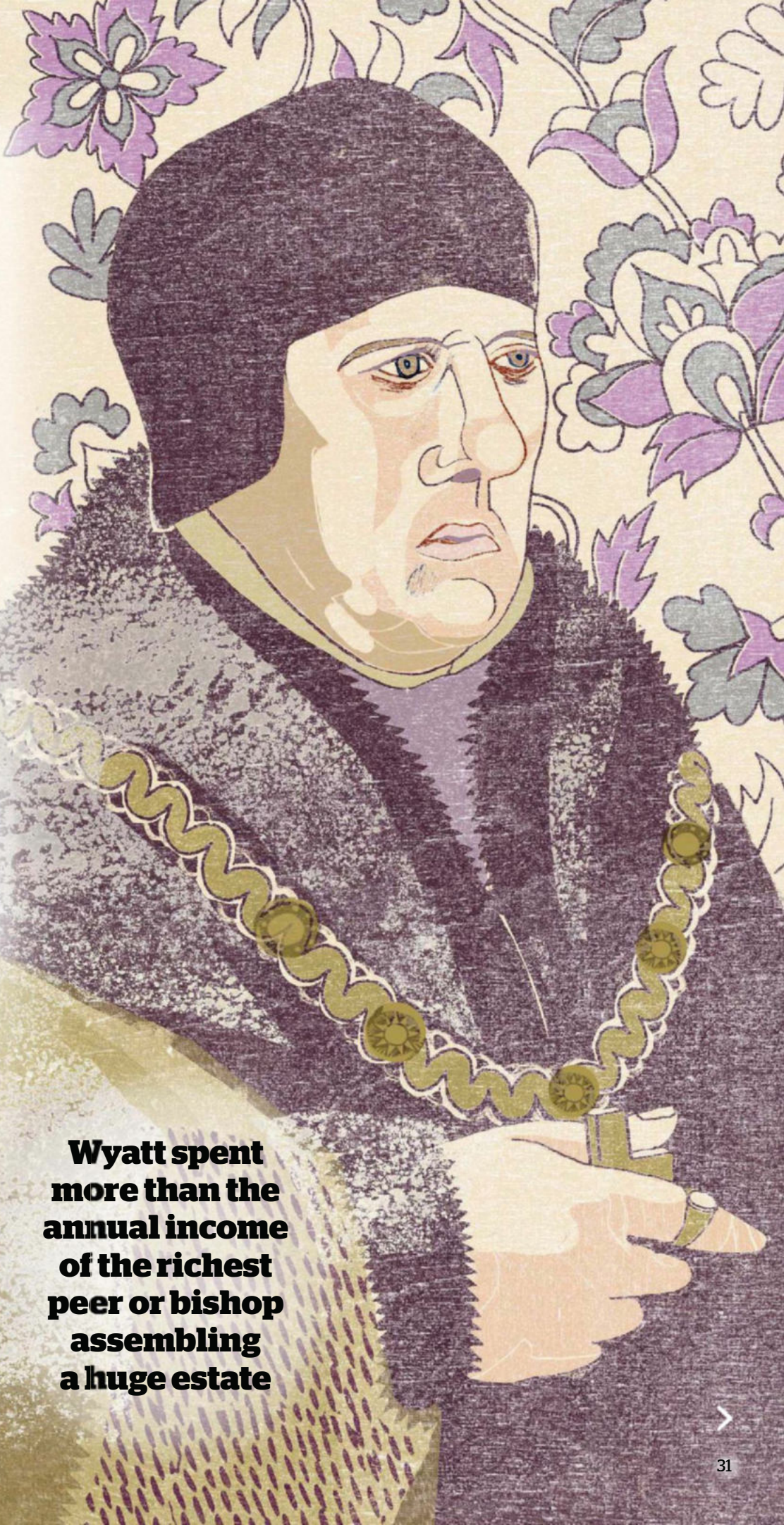
His origins are obscure but Wyatt (c1460–1537) seems to have won Henry's gratitude by enduring imprisonment and torture at the hands of Richard III during the plots that won the Tudors the throne. Early in the reign he served as a diplomat and military commander, but the post he made his own was master of the jewel-house. He cared for the plate and jewellery in which Henry stored up his wealth and which was put on display on grand occasions to overawe the king's subjects and foreigners alike. In 1523 Wyatt went on to become the prime co-ordinator of all royal finances as treasurer of the chamber — a job so complex in a time of war and heavy taxation that his accounts were finally signed off only six years after his retirement in 1528.

Wyatt's talent for financial detail transferred readily to his private affairs. Scores of deeds attest to his painstaking operations on the land market, in which he spent more than the annual income of the richest peer or bishop assembling an estate spread across a dozen counties, but centred in northern Kent.

There, around Allington Castle, Wyatt bought small plots one after another, exploiting his cash liquidity and the troubles of his neighbours while often telling his victims what a favour he was doing them. He offered one mortgage loan out of "special love, favour and good mind" towards the recipient. Doubtless, however, he planned to seize the property once the mortgage payments couldn't be kept up.

He was equally ruthless as a landlord, specifying in leases that his tenants would have to bear the expenses of his receivers if they were kept waiting for his rent money and enclosing the common marsh at Milton by Gravesend on advantageous terms.

Wyatt lived longer than most of his colleagues, until autumn 1536. His son, the poet Sir Thomas Wyatt, died young, and his grandson, Sir Thomas the younger, rebelled unsuccessfully against Queen Mary. Ironically it is the confiscation of his family papers that enables us to reconstruct Sir Henry's accumulation of the family fortune that his grandson would gamble and lose.



**Wyatt spent more than the annual income of the richest peer or bishop assembling a huge estate**



### 3 The multi-talented fixer

#### Sir Thomas Lovell

All the new men were versatile, but few ranged as widely as Thomas Lovell (c1449–1524). He was a Lincoln's Inn lawyer from a minor Norfolk gentry family. Throughout his career he was active in doing justice, travelling from Sussex to Yorkshire to oversee the activities of the justices of the peace. He co-ordinated royal income and expenditure as treasurer of the chamber and chancellor of the exchequer. He was a diplomat and a courtier, managing court finance as treasurer of the household and marshalling the crowds at the wedding of Henry VII's son Prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon in 1501. He took charge of state prisoners as lieutenant of the Tower of London. He even tidied up history for Henry, organising the building of Richard III's tomb and Henry's memorial almshouses at Westminster.

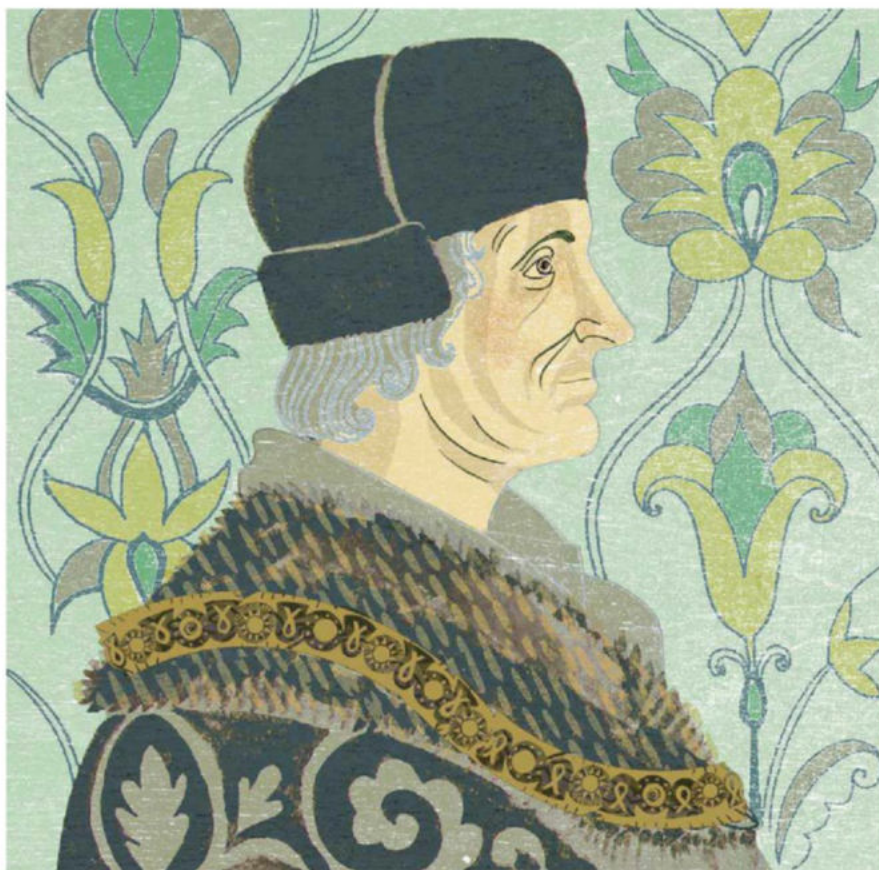
At court and in the counties Lovell was also the supreme networker. Leading noblemen and bishops valued his friendship. His wife was close to the queen, Elizabeth of York. The king stayed regularly at his palatial home, Elsings in

Enfield, where his 89 servants in their light tawny orange livery coats served up well over a thousand gallons of wine each year. He was the acknowledged patron of those who governed a string of Midlands towns from Nottingham to Wallingford.

Three lord mayors of London attended Lovell's funeral, and the grocers' company kept his portrait in their hall decades after his death. Lovell was also a thoughtful promoter of university-educated clergy.

His connections equipped him to serve the king. A list survives from 1508 of those sworn to fight in Lovell's retinue, a force 1,365 strong. They were the leaders of small town and village society, yeoman clothiers from Halifax, mayors and churchwardens from Walsall, rich farmers from Oxfordshire. Lovell's links with them gave him and the king the grip on local affairs they needed, not just to raise an army, but to build a stronger regime.

Lovell had no children, but his masterful marriage-broking and the careful division of the lands he had bought entrenched his nephews and nieces in the Norfolk gentry and the peerage.



### 4 The enforcer

#### Edmund Dudley

Like Poynings, Edmund Dudley (c1462–1510) came from a junior line of a noble house, but he preferred the pen to the sword. He could fight if he had to: the goods confiscated at his arrest included two stylish armoured coats of velvet studded with gilt nails. But he won his spurs by interventions in the legal debates of Gray's Inn so brilliant that his contemporaries took notes on them.

Dudley took a special interest in the law's potential for enforcing royal rights. He took charge of making the king's power pay, selling offices and pardons, fining merchants for smuggling, gentlemen for rioting, bishops for letting criminal clergymen escape from their gaols. In less than four years he raised more than £200,000, about two years of





## 5 The prince's man

### Sir Henry Marney

royal income from more normal sources. When the rich and powerful felt aggrieved at Henry's exactions, it was easy to blame Dudley.

It was all the easier because he so visibly profited by his power. He was a predator on the land market, buying up estates in at least nine counties, often from those he had himself put in debt to the king. He filled his home with cloth-of-gold bed-hangings, damask cushions and French and Spanish furniture. He even had one doublet in the royal colour of purple. No wonder one chronicler thought he was "so proud that the best duke in this land was more easy to sue and to speak to, than he was".

Dudley made a good scapegoat in 1509 when Henry died, and was executed on spurious charges of treason. Yet he left a considerable legacy: in prison he wrote a treatise on government, *The Tree of Commonwealth*, which sheds light on the principles of Henry's ministers.

Marney (1447–1523) came from an old but not very rich Essex knightly family. His career under Henry VII was less spectacular than those of his colleagues, with routine service in local government, in parliament, at court and in war, but he could afford to bide his time. By 1501 he was a leading member of the household of Prince Henry, who became heir to the throne on the death of his elder brother, Arthur, in 1502. As his patent of creation put it when Henry made him Lord Marney in 1523, he had served Henry with probity, loyalty and hard work from the king's tender years onwards.

At Henry's accession Marney was rewarded with a series of important offices. He became captain of the guard, responsible for the king's security and for arresting suspected traitors, most famously the Duke of Buckingham in 1521. He also became chief steward of the duchy of Cornwall, regulating the local tin industry. He became chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, presiding over the duchy council which enforced justice on, and extracted revenue from, not only Lancashire, but also its substantial estates in East Anglia, the Midlands and Wales.

Marney's friends and relatives shared in his good fortune as he found them a slew of offices on the duchy of Lancaster lands. But there was hard work to be done in the new reign and Marney did not shirk it. He

worked with Thomas Lovell and others to process debts due to the late king and tackle social problems such as vagrancy and rising food prices. He pushed home royal power as hard as his predecessors, rebuking one nobleman who had leased out duchy of Lancaster land on his own authority, and confronting the Earl of Shrewsbury in a display of what Cardinal Wolsey called "his cruelty against the great estates of this realm".

His son succeeded him as Lord Marney, only to die two years later, but one major monument to his achievements remained. Layer Marney House, with its eight-storey towers and classical terracotta decoration, is the most eye-catching survivor among the many creations that proclaimed the power of Henry VII's new men. **II**

Steven Gunn is professor of early modern history at Merton College, the University of Oxford

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOK

► **Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England** by Steven Gunn (OUP, 2016)

##### LISTEN AGAIN

► To listen to George Osborne nominate Henry VII in Radio 4's **Great Lives**, go to [bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00d6zwt](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00d6zwt)



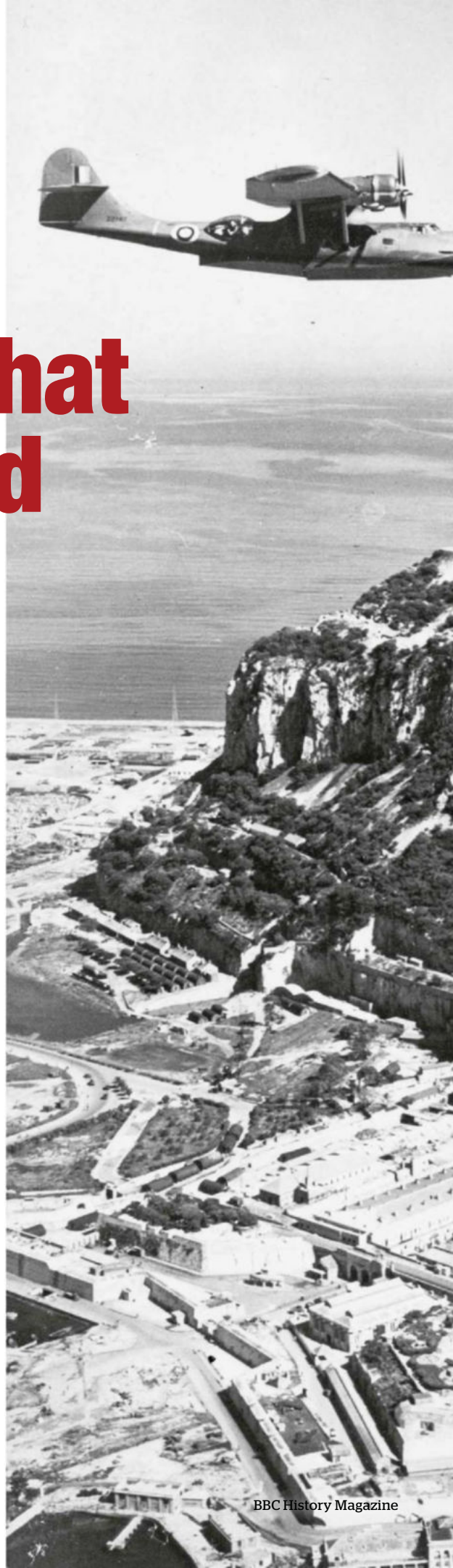


# Hitler's fury, Franco's guile and the **bribe that saved the world**

In 1940, the Nazis hatched a plan to prise Gibraltar from the British and seize control of the Mediterranean. Luckily for the Allies, the road to the Rock lay through Spain - and, as **Jules Stewart** reveals, General Franco's top brass could be bought

## **A rock and a high place**

A Catalina seaplane passes over Gibraltar on patrol in March 1942. Reports of a planned German invasion of the Rock sparked Churchill's audacious scheme to bribe top Spanish military officials







**A**dolf Hitler was in a particularly foul mood on the afternoon of 23 October 1940. Pacing furiously about the railway platform at the French town of Hendaye, near the Spanish border, he held his arms rigidly at his side in the way that had set Neville Chamberlain's teeth on edge at the Munich Conference two years previously. Generalissimo Francisco Franco's train was late, confirming the German delegation's suspicions that the Spanish were a hopeless lot.

When at last the pudgy little general with the squeaky voice alighted from his railway carriage, the smile on Hitler's face belied a premonition that he was heading for an exasperating encounter. And he was. "I would rather have four of my teeth pulled out than deal with that man again," Hitler reportedly confided to Benito Mussolini a few days later.

For seven hours Hitler struggled in vain to persuade Franco that his non-belligerent nation should enter the war. The wily Spanish leader demurred, knowing that he had little to lose by making demands the Nazi leader would almost certainly dismiss as unacceptable. Franco assured the führer and his foreign secretary Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was present at the meeting along with his Spanish counterpart Ramón Serrano Suñer, that he would join the Axis powers at some unspecified future date. What he asked in return was nothing less than France's north African colonies and French Cameroon, along with German supplies of armaments, and food for his people, who were suffering horrible depredations after three years of civil war. Then he revealed the icing on the cake: he requested the transfer of Gibraltar to Spanish sovereignty once Britain was defeated.

### **A rock past**

'Return' would be more accurate. Gibraltar was captured from the Moors in 1462 by the Castilian nobleman Juan Alonso de Guzmán, leaving as its only indigenous north Africans the colony of Barbary macaques whose 300 descendants continue to thrive in the Upper Rock area. Gibraltar remained under Spanish dominion for more than 250 years until the War of the Spanish Succession.

In 1704, the two-square-mile peninsula that controls the entrance to the Mediterranean was captured by an Anglo-Dutch naval force under the command of Sir George Rooke, who bombarded the Rock into submission in the name of Queen Anne. Under the Treaty of Utrecht, signed in 1713, Gibraltar was ceded "in perpetuity" to Britain, and now enjoys the status of a UK overseas territory – to the everlasting

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# Hitler and Gibraltar

annoyance of the Spanish government.

After his bout with Franco, Hitler's next stop was another railway carriage meeting in France, where he was to seal an agreement on collaboration with France's puppet Vichy president Marshal Philippe Pétain. The führer might well have imagined how the 84-year-old hero of the First World War would have reacted to the news that his country's African possessions were to be handed over to Franco. Hitler made it clear in a directive issued after the fall of France that "the most pressing task of the French is the defensive and offensive protection of their African possessions against England and the De Gaulle movement". This would ensure France's participation in the war against Britain, the only European belligerent still infuriatingly holding out against the Nazi war machine.

But Hitler needed Franco. If Britain could not be crushed by aerial bombardment – a reality the führer had to swallow by mid-September 1940, when it became clear that the Luftwaffe had failed to gain air superiority in the Battle of Britain – then the enemy must be strangled into submission. That meant closing the Strait of Gibraltar.

Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper later spelled out the consequences that would have followed a German invasion of Gibraltar: "The Axis would have obtained control of the whole Mediterranean, cut off the British Army in the Middle East and closed a whole future theatre of war. What hope of ultimate victory could even Churchill have then held out?"

## Crucial gateway

Hitler harboured no doubts that Gibraltar held the key to Britain's ultimate defeat. In a later letter to Franco, the Nazi leader reprimanded his Spanish counterpart for refusing to ally himself with Germany and permit the Wehrmacht to march across the country to storm Gibraltar. "The attack on Gibraltar and the closing of the Strait," Hitler lamented, "would have changed the



**Gibraltar's control of naval access to the Mediterranean made it a key strategic asset**



**ABOVE: A German tank, sent to support Franco's nationalist forces during the civil war, dominates a Spanish street in 1938. Italy also sent military support  
RIGHT: Franco and Hitler exchange cordial greetings at Hendaye on 23 October 1940 – though the outcome of their meeting didn't please the führer**

Mediterranean situation in one stroke. If we had been able to cross the Spanish border... Gibraltar would today be in our hands." The führer was convinced that depriving Britain of access to the Mediterranean "would have helped to decide world history".

Hitler could not be accused of failing to give it his best shot. Operation Felix, the codename for the German offensive against Gibraltar, suffered from only one major handicap: the lack of Spanish acquiescence. What the Nazi leadership envisaged was the free passage of German troops through Spain under the cover of a formal diplomatic protest, thus providing camouflage to refute British charges of Franco violating his commitment to neutrality.

It's a stretch to imagine Franco could have convinced Britain that Spain had been overrun against his will. British intelligence was aware of Hitler's plan to involve Spain in his attack on Gibraltar. A top secret Special Operations Executive memorandum mentions Germany's intention to use Spanish ships and railways to carry supplies disguised as ordinary imports, and the use of Spanish aerodromes by Luftwaffe fighters and bombers.

When Hitler returned to Berlin in November 1940, he issued a directive setting out the details of Operation Felix, starting with reconnaissance missions by German agents to explore Gibraltar's defences and airfield. Special units of the German Foreign Intelligence Department "in disguised co-operation with the Spanish" would shield the area from British attempts to discover preparations for the attack, which would begin on day 39 after German troops entered Spain.

Hitler's battle strategy was to assemble an

attack force composed of two army corps, an SS division and an air corps. The 49th Army Corps was tasked with engaging Gibraltar's 11,600-strong garrison. The 39th, its flanks protected by the SS division, was to stand ready to invade Portugal in the event of an Allied threat from that direction. The Luftwaffe would occupy six aerodromes in and around the Atlantic coastline to launch an aerial barrage on the Royal Navy.

The Nazi high command mapped out Operation Felix with painstaking precision: four guns to protect the eastern flank, another four to the south, a three-column assault on the town and, followed by the storming of the Royal Battery, the shipment of 13,000 tonnes of ammunition, 7,500 tonnes of fuel and 136 tonnes of food daily to feed the troops.

British intelligence was under no illusions about the outcome of a successful Operation Felix, noting: "The strength of German artillery would have been overwhelming and it is considered that most of our heavy equipment and anti-aircraft batteries would have been knocked out." Of course, "What if" is an unsatisfactory approach to history. The fact is, Operation Felix never happened, so does not form part of the fabric of historical events. And the underlying reason it never happened was Franco, who by no means accepted the inevitability of an Axis victory.

Nevertheless, the British government remained gravely concerned about the German threat to Gibraltar. Winston Churchill acknowledged that his two greatest concerns at that stage of the war were the loss of Gibraltar and the U-boat attacks on Atlantic convoys. Churchill feared that the





ABOVE: A British sentry stands guard at a reservoir in Gibraltar in 1940, when Hitler's planned invasion could have spelled disaster for the Allied campaign in the Mediterranean  
RIGHT: Juan March, a Spanish banker, pictured before the civil war. March distributed British bribes, helping block German access to Gibraltar



## Hitler was convinced that capturing Gibraltar, depriving Britain of access to the Mediterranean, “would have helped to decide world history”

Nazis might lose patience with Franco, and would then send an army across the Pyrenees any time after April 1941, with Franco powerless to resist a Wehrmacht onslaught.

Churchill reasoned that because Gibraltar was not equipped to hold out against a German siege, the solution was to stop it happening. Acting on a suggestion by the naval attaché at the British embassy in Madrid, the colourful adventurer Alan Hillgarth, Churchill launched one of the most audacious political gambits of the war: the distribution of US\$13m in bribes to top-ranking Spanish military figures, who would ensure that Franco adhered to his commitment to neutrality – if necessary, by launching a coup d'état. The money had already started to flow in the summer of 1940, before Hitler's frustrating meeting with Franco.

### Disguising the bribes

The source of this money had to be kept secret at all costs. If Britain's cover were blown, no Spanish general would risk taking bribes from Perfidious Albion. The intermediary was Juan March, a banker of impeccable Francoist credentials. At the time he was the world's sixth wealthiest man and Franco's principal financier during the civil war.

Having operated as a double agent in the First World War, March was highly skilled in covert activities. He was also a supporter of the

Spanish monarchy and its enlightened heir apparent Don Juan de Borbón, who was a connoisseur of Scotch whisky and a former officer in the British Royal Navy. Despite his right-wing proclivities, March opposed Spanish entry into the war. He knew full well that Hitler had little sympathy for the monarchist cause and even less for the open-minded Don Juan.

March acted as the conduit for the transfer of \$10m to Swiss Bank Corporation in New York, later to be topped up with another \$3m. Some \$2m of this money found its way into the pocket of Franco's older brother Nicolás, who used his windfall to build a sizeable business empire after the war. Valentín Galarza was another high-ranking beneficiary of British largesse. His appointment as interior minister had come as a heavy blow to Franco's brother-in-law, the suave, moustachioed Ramón Serrano Súñer, a rabid Hitlerite with film-star looks. As foreign affairs minister he had exercised de facto control over policing, a role now usurped by Galarza, who could be counted on to frustrate Serrano Súñer's pro-Nazi belligerence.

In all, eight top-echelon officials and a number of well-placed lower ranks were drawn into the operation. The British Foreign Office has declassified the secret correspondence concerning the bribes, but telegrams held in Spanish archives seem to have vanished.

Nevertheless, the bribes served their purpose. Their recipients neutralised hardliners in the Franco entourage who were beating the war drums. By mid-1941, Hitler had turned his war machine east and Churchill could breathe easier. Had Gibraltar been lost, Britain would have attempted to capture the Canary Islands to secure a naval base; after Germany invaded Russia, Churchill was able to shelve that plan.

Hitler never forgave Franco for refusing to allow the Wehrmacht to access Gibraltar from Spanish territory. In his mind Franco and his regime went “beyond the pale of [sic] the law... with the blessing of the priesthood, at the expense of the rest”.

A few weeks before his death, Hitler dictated his political testament to his private secretary, Martin Bormann. Reflecting on his aspirations for Gibraltar, he claimed that: “The easiest thing would have been to occupy Gibraltar with our commandos and with Franco's connivance, but without any declaration of war on his part.” This “would have changed the Mediterranean situation in one stroke”. Neither the führer nor Franco was aware of the forces that had been working secretly to prevent that outcome. ■

Jules Stewart is an author and former Reuters correspondent. He lived in Spain for 20 years and has written widely on that country

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

► **Franco: a Biography** by Paul Preston (Fontana, 2011)

► **Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany, and World War II** by Stanley G Payne (Yale, 2008)



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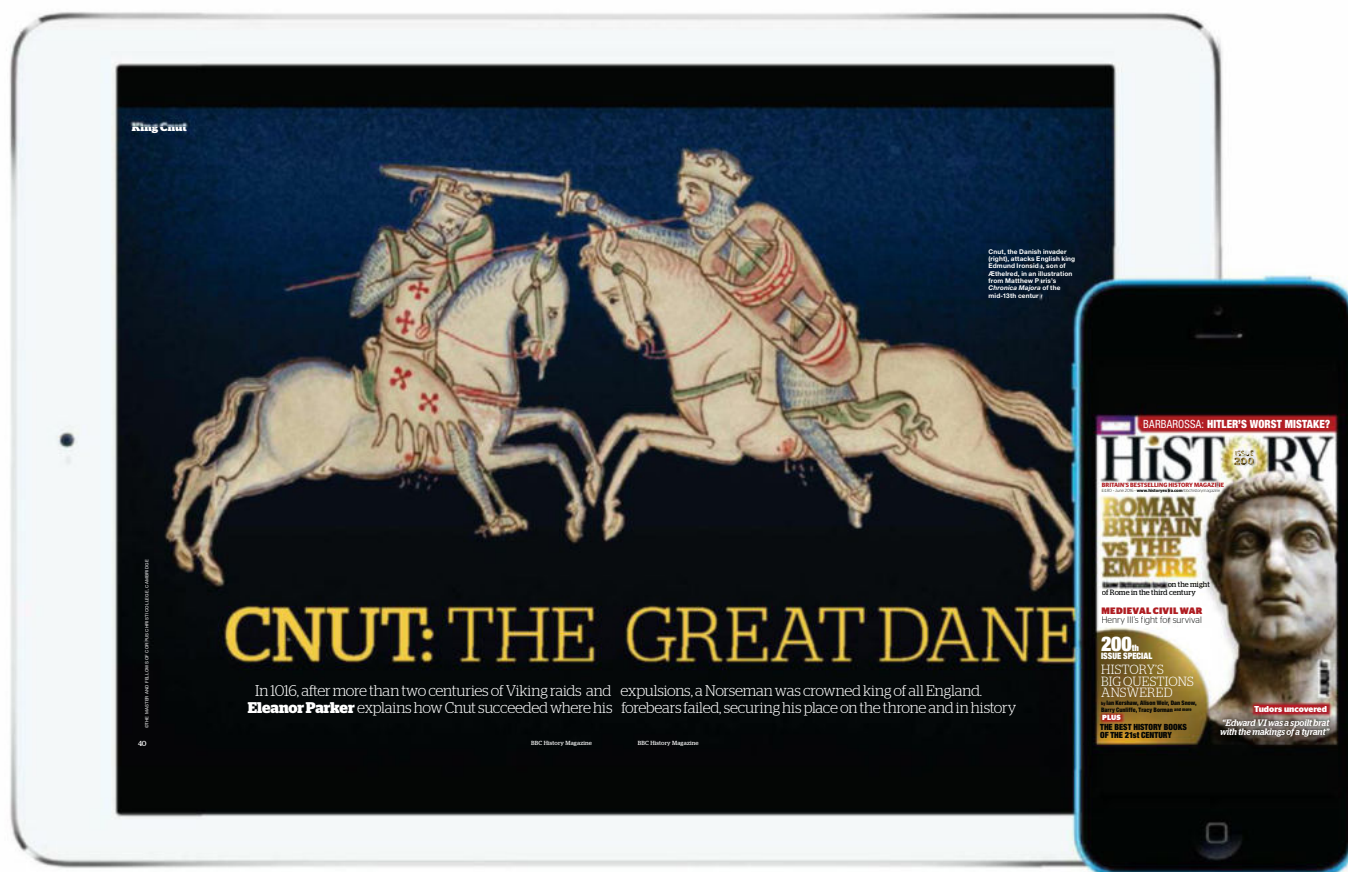


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# CNUT: THE

In 1016, after more than two centuries of Viking raids and **Eleanor Parker** explains how Cnut succeeded where his





Cnut, the Danish invader (right), attacks English king Edmund Ironside, son of Æthelred, in an illustration from Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* of the mid-13th century

# GREAT DANE

expulsions, a Norseman was crowned king of all England.  
forebears failed, securing his place on the throne and in history



Only two kings in English history are known as 'the Great' – and one of them was Danish. When the young Viking Cnut seized the throne of England in 1016, few could have predicted that he would become one of the most successful kings of the early medieval period, ruling a Scandinavian empire that stretched across the North Sea world.

"There was no justice in his succession to the throne," the 12th-century historian William of Malmesbury wrote of Cnut, "but he arranged his life with great statesmanship and courage." Later historians have agreed, judging Cnut to be a remarkably effective king, though his reign in England began with a violent conquest.

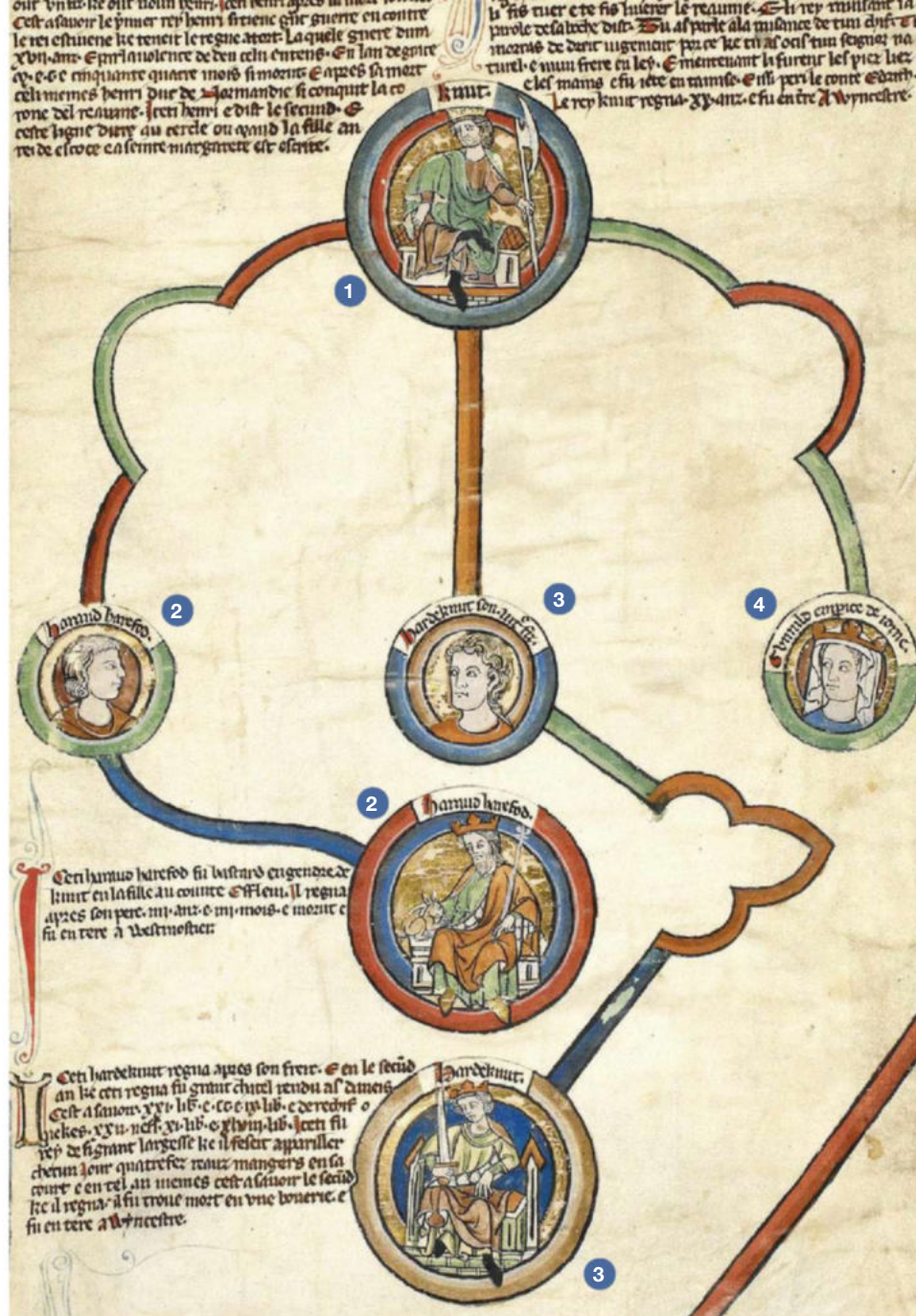
Born probably in the 990s, Cnut was the son of Swein Forkbeard, king of Denmark, and a Polish princess whose name is not recorded. Throughout Cnut's childhood Swein carried out devastating raids on England that increasingly undermined the rule of the English king Æthelred.

In 1013, when Cnut was in his teens, Swein launched a full-scale invasion, landing a fleet of ships and forcing Æthelred to flee to Normandy. Cnut accompanied his father to England, and was left in charge of the fleet as Swein campaigned in the south. Around this time Swein, who had forged alliances with Æthelred's enemies among the English nobility, married his teenage son to an Englishwoman. Ælfgifu of Northampton belonged to a powerful family in the Midlands, and her relatives were important allies for Swein and Cnut.

By Christmas 1013 Swein was king of England, but his reign was short-lived. He died suddenly on 3 February 1014, after just a few weeks as king. Cnut was chosen to lead the Danish army in England, but he was young and inexperienced, and unable to hold on to his father's conquered lands. The English nobles invited Æthelred to return from Normandy – on condition that he promised to be a better ruler than before – and Cnut was forced to flee back to Denmark.

In the summer of 1015, he returned to England with a huge fleet. One source describes the splendour of his ships: "So magnificent was their ornamentation that the eyes of those who beheld them were dazzled, and they seemed to be made of fire rather than of wood... The ships alone would have terrified the enemy, before the warriors they carried joined battle at all."

Even so, it took more than a year of war before Cnut seized control of England. After Æthelred died in April 1016, the English king's



An early 14th-century French genealogical roll shows Cnut (1) and his offspring: Harold Harefoot (2), his son by first wife Ælfgifu; Harthacnut (3), his son with Emma; and his daughter Gunnhild (4), who married the son of Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II in 1036

son Edmund Ironside stoutly led the defence against the Danes, and over the summer of that year Cnut and Edmund fought a series of battles across the south of England. The Danes fiercely besieged London, but failed to capture it.

The final battle was fought on 18 October 1016 at a place in Essex named as 'Assandun'. The location is disputed, but it was probably Ashingdon or Ashdon. The Danes were victorious, and many were killed on the English side; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle laments that "all the best of the English nation" were slain. Danish tradition said that Cnut's troops carried into battle a magical banner embroidered with a raven that beat its wings to prophesy their triumph.

After Assandun, Cnut and Edmund agreed to make peace, dividing the kingdom between them. When Edmund died just six weeks later, on 30 November, Cnut was left as sole king of England.

## Cementing kingship

In the first months of his reign Cnut ruthlessly eliminated anyone who might challenge him. The remaining members of the English royal family were killed or driven into exile, and Edmund Ironside's wife and young children fled to Hungary.

Æthelred's widow, Emma, had taken refuge in Normandy during these dangerous years, but in 1017 Cnut sent for her, and she agreed to marry him – her husband's enemy. By



# The trials and triumphs of Cnut

**Cnut is born**, the son of Swein Forkbeard, king of Denmark, and a Polish princess whose name is unknown

c990-c1000

**Swein invades England, accompanied by Cnut**, and drives the English king Æthelred into exile. Around this time Cnut marries Ælfgifu of Northampton, but is forced to return to Denmark after Swein's death early in 1014



King Æthelred, depicted in a 13th-century illumination

Cnut returns to invade England and **fights a long campaign against the English** forces led by Æthelred's son, Edmund Ironside

1013

1015-16

1016



A medieval illustration shows Swein landing in England

1017

After the battle of Assandun on 18 October, **Cnut and Edmund Ironside agree to make peace** and divide the kingdom between them. When Edmund dies on 30 November, Cnut is accepted as king of all England

1018



Emma of Normandy

Though Ælfgifu is still alive, **Cnut marries Æthelred's widow Emma**, sister of the Duke of Normandy

Cnut fights a battle against the combined **forces of the kings of Norway and Sweden** at the Helgeå river in southern Sweden

Cnut consolidates his power in England by exiling or killing his political opponents and appointing his supporters to four great earldoms. He issues his first law-code, **reaffirming the laws of his Anglo-Saxon predecessors**

1026

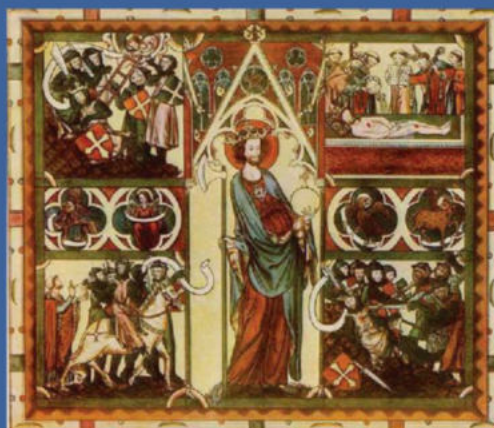
1027

1028

On pilgrimage to Rome, Cnut attends the coronation of **Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II** and is honourably received by the pope



Grave crown of the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II



King Olaf Haraldsson of Norway (later Saint Olaf), overthrown by Cnut in 1028

**Cnut becomes ruler of Norway.**

He sends his first wife, Ælfgifu, and their son Swein to rule on his behalf

1035

**Cnut dies in Shaftesbury** on 12 November and is buried in the Old Minster, Winchester

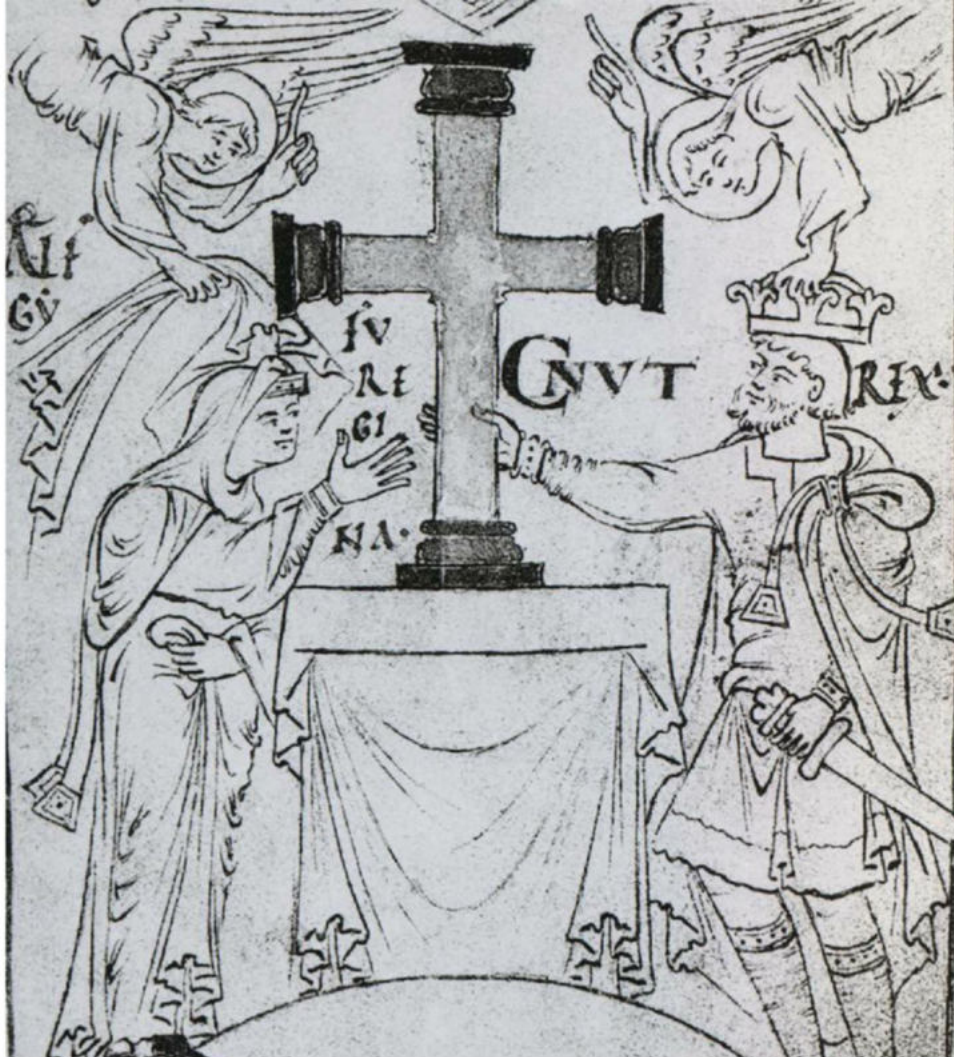


marrying Emma, sister of the Duke of Normandy, Cnut gained an alliance with a powerful neighbour and neutralised any challenge from the children of Æthelred and Emma, who remained in Normandy throughout Cnut's reign.

Cnut already had two sons with Ælfgifu of Northampton, and he did not repudiate her or their children after his marriage to Emma. However, Emma was acknowledged as his queen, and he seems to have made an assurance to her that any son she might have by him would succeed him as king. Cnut and Emma went on to have two children, Harthacnut and Gunnhild.

The first year of Cnut's reign saw political executions and heavy taxation imposed on England, but by the end of 1017 his power seems to have been secure, and from then on he adopted a conciliatory approach to the country he had conquered. He divided England into four earldoms, appointing his loyal supporters – both English and Danish – as earls of Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex and East Anglia. In 1018, at a meeting in Oxford, an agreement was reached that declared Cnut had “established peace and friendship between the Danes and the English, and put an end to all their former enmity”. Both English and Danes agreed to follow the law-code of Edgar, Æthelred's father, and “to love King Cnut with justice and loyalty”.

This peaceful state of affairs seems largely to have endured for the rest of Cnut's reign. Surprisingly, there is little evidence of rebellion in England against the Danish conquerors – certainly nothing compared to the turmoil that followed the Norman conquest, when revolts continued for more



Cnut and his wife Emma present a golden cross to the New Minster in Winchester, depicted in a contemporary image. Both were generous benefactors of the church

Cnut became king of England, Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden – a **North Sea empire matched by few rulers** before or since

## Cnut and the waves

The tale of the king who failed to turn the tide

To many people today, Cnut is best known for the story of how he failed to command the waves. This tale has become almost proverbial as a reminder of the limits of human power and the foolishness of trying to command what is beyond one's control. In origin, however, the story was intended to illustrate Cnut's wisdom and piety.

It first appeared in the 12th century, in a chronicle written about a century after Cnut's death. The historian Henry of Huntingdon says that when the king was at the height of his power he ordered his chair to be placed on the shore as the tide was coming in. When the sea did not obey his command to retreat, Cnut proclaimed: “Let all the world know that the power of kings

is empty and worthless” compared to the power of God. Henry described this as a “fine and magnificent deed”.

This story is almost certainly legend, but it illustrates something important about how Cnut was remembered after his death. As a Viking king his greatest achievements were won through his dominance over the sea: his ships had conquered a great North Sea empire, and no other medieval king had such a good claim to be able to command the waves. At the same time, he gained the support of the church by presenting himself as a Christian monarch who acknowledged that his power ultimately came from God. The story of the waves astutely combines these two aspects of Cnut's success.



Cnut's ship, pictured in a 14th-century manuscript of Wace's *Roman de Brut*, a verse literary history of Britain



than a decade after 1066. Perhaps this was because Cnut so quickly showed his intention to become almost more English than the English. He ruled through existing English laws, and promoted Englishmen as well as Danes to be his advisers and earls. Lands were given to only a handful of high-ranking Danes, who married into English families and forged a mixed Anglo-Scandinavian society.

## Wooing the church

Crucially, Cnut also won the support of the English church and, under the guidance of Wulfstan, archbishop of York, the young Viking began to present himself as a Christian king. He made overtures of reconciliation towards the church, becoming a generous patron of monasteries and a devotee of English saints. He performed public gestures of atonement for the worst atrocities of his conquest, founding a church at the site of the battle of Assandun to commemorate the dead, and paying honour to Saint Ælfheah, archbishop of Canterbury, who had been brutally killed by a Danish army in 1012.

A famous image of Cnut and Emma, made in their lifetime (shown left), depicts them presenting a precious golden cross to the New Minster in Winchester. They are crowned by angels, with Christ, the Virgin Mary and Saint Peter above them and monks below. The picture shows an ideal royal couple, devout and generous towards the church. By presenting himself in this way, Cnut made himself very popular with English monastic writers.

By the 12th century there were many stories about his piety, telling how he presented his own crown to a figure of Christ, or walked five miles barefoot to the shrine of Saint Cuthbert at Durham. At Ely, it was said that Cnut so loved to visit the monastery that he composed a song in English expressing his delight at the singing of the monks:

*Merry sang the monks in Ely  
When Cnut the king rowed by.  
Row, men, near the land  
And let us hear these monks sing.*

All of this burnished Cnut's reputation in later medieval sources, in which he was presented as an exemplary Christian king.

But though he may have ruled England peacefully, Cnut could be severe in his other dominions. In the second half of his reign he expanded his empire into Norway, in part by bribing the supporters of his chief rival, Olaf Haraldsson. Olaf, in alliance with the king of Sweden, attempted to resist Cnut's growing power in the north, and fought a battle against Cnut at the Helgeå river in Sweden in 1026. But those attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, and by about 1028 Norway was

## Cnut's domain

The Anglo-Norse empire c1030



By the 1030s Cnut ruled England, Denmark, Norway and part of Sweden

under Cnut's control. He sent his first wife, Ælfifu, and their son Swein to rule on his behalf in Norway, where they proved to be very unpopular.

At the height of his power Cnut was king of England, Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden, and may also have had some authority over Scotland and Ireland – a North Sea empire matched by few rulers before or since. In 1027 he travelled to Rome, where he was welcomed with honour by the pope and Conrad II, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. He was treated as a northern emperor, and arranged for his daughter Gunnhild to marry Conrad's son. While in Rome Cnut sent back a letter to the people of England declaring that he would never cease to devote himself to "the needs of all my people".

Because of his extensive empire, Cnut's court was multilingual to an extent unparalleled in pre-Conquest England. The king's laws and official pronouncements continued to be issued in English, but Cnut was a patron of Old Norse poetry, too; his poets praised him as "the greatest prince under the heavens". Emma was also a patron of literature; she commissioned a Latin history of Cnut's conquest and reign known as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* ('In Praise of Queen Emma'). Cnut's court in England was a meeting place for people from across his empire and beyond, including Danes, Norwegians and Icelanders as well as Emma and her Norman followers.

## End of Viking rule

Cnut died at Shaftesbury on 12 November 1035, aged probably not much more than 40, and was buried in the Old Minster at Winchester, the traditional capital of the kings of Wessex. His remains, together with those of other pre-Conquest monarchs, were

removed from their resting-place in 1642 by parliamentary soldiers, and are now among a jumble of bones kept in mortuary chests in Winchester Cathedral.

After Cnut's death, the succession was contested by sons of his two wives. Harold Harefoot, one of Cnut's children with Ælfifu, gained enough support to become king, but died less than five years later without an heir. Harold was succeeded by Emma's son Harthacnut but he, too, died young and childless in 1042.

During Harthacnut's reign his half-brother Edward – Emma's son by Æthelred – returned to England from a long exile in Normandy and on Harthacnut's death became king. The line of the kings of Wessex had returned to the English throne, and Edward (later known as the Confessor) went on to reign for more than 20 years. His mother, Emma, died in 1052; she had been the wife of two kings and mother of two more, and had long outlived both her husbands.

Though Cnut's dynasty quickly died out in England, the Danish men and women he had promoted continued to influence English politics throughout Edward's reign. Earl Godwin and his Danish wife Gytha, a close relative of Cnut, headed a powerful Anglo-Danish family who clashed with Edward and his Norman supporters at court. In 1066, when Edward died without a direct heir, the earl's son Harold briefly occupied the English throne, while his cousin, Cnut's nephew Swein, ruled in Denmark.

Cnut is remembered as one of the most successful kings in English history. In part this is because of the extent of his empire, but also because he managed to rule through the strong and effective systems of government and law already established in England.

There was one unexpected consequence of Cnut's conquest: by destabilising the English monarchy and strengthening Edward's ties with Normandy, his reign set the stage for the Norman conquest. The invasion that made England part of a Scandinavian empire in 1016 led to another, exactly 50 years later, that turned England's political focus from Scandinavia to continental Europe. England would never again be as closely united to the northern world as it was in Cnut's reign. ■

Eleanor Parker teaches Old and Middle English literature at Brasenose College, Oxford

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### LISTEN AGAIN

► BBC Radio 3's **The Essay: Anglo-Saxon Portraits**, which include Dr Timothy Bolton discussing Cnut, are available on BBC iPlayer Radio. [bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01rr95y](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01rr95y)





AMAZING LIVES

# Socialite, spy, saviour

As part of our occasional series profiling remarkable yet unheralded characters from history, **Hallie Rubenhold** introduces Grace Dalrymple Elliott, who made a career as the mistress of earls and dukes – but showed a steely side during the bloodiest days of the French Revolution

ILLUSTRATION BY STAVROS DAMOS

**T**he death of an elderly Scottish lady on 15 May 1823 in the village of Ville d'Avray, between Paris and Versailles, was itself unremarkable. Yet the life of the woman, Grace Dalrymple Elliott, had been full of intrigue, ordeal and courage. She had consorted with dukes, lords and earls, reputedly bearing a child by the Prince of Wales; she had saved a marquis during the French Revolution; and she had endured a hellish stay in jail alongside (she claimed) a future empress.

Born around 1754, Grace was brought up in her maternal grandparents' house in Edinburgh till her mother's death around 1765, when she was sent to school in France. Soon after returning in 1771 she married Dr John Eliot, about 20 years her senior. The marriage was not a success and, after affairs on both sides, ended when Eliot, discovering Grace's indiscretions with Viscount Valentia, sued his rival for Criminal Conversation (adultery), securing a divorce in 1776.

## The oldest profession

Publicly disgraced and financially ruined, Grace became a courtesan – a professional mistress to the well-to-do. She created a luxurious though precarious life for herself through liaisons with a succession of titled men, notably the Marquess of Cholmondeley and the Prince of Wales – later George IV – by whom, she claimed, she bore a daughter.

From spring 1779 she began to visit Paris, where she met Louis Philippe II, the Duc d'Orléans (at that time the Duc de Chartres). Grace found the French capital not only more tolerant of a woman's indiscretions, but also home to an enormously wealthy nobility who could fund an extravagant lifestyle for their mistresses. She moved to Paris in 1786 to continue her liaison with Orléans. She could

not, of course, have foreseen an imminent end to the ancient regime and its excesses.

Three years later, French revolutionaries stormed the Bastille. Through the period of tumult, Grace remained in Paris to be with the Duc d'Orléans (now a Jacobin), despite her royalist sympathies. And in September 1792 she became embroiled in the conflict.

That month, Jacobin supporters burst into prisons to murder those they believed to be counter-revolutionaries and aristocrats. Grace was asked to help smuggle out of Paris the Marquis de Champcenetz, a former valet to the king and the governor of the Tuileries Palace. He had been wounded a month earlier during the assault on the Tuileries and, gravely ill, had been hidden by Grace's friend Mrs Meyler, an English widow. As guards searched houses in Paris, Grace volunteered to hide Champcenetz in her country residence just beyond the city walls.

Having bundled him into her carriage, she learned that the city barriers had been shut. Abandoning her vehicle she half-carried the feverish marquis through streets busy with soldiers to her townhouse where, knowing that her servants were fiercely loyal to the revolution, she hid the fugitive in her bedchamber, secreting him in her mattresses as guards searched her house. Eventually she was able to spirit him away to her country house and then, in January 1793, to England.

This was one of several such incidents recorded in her memoirs, published posthumously in 1859 as *Journal of My Life During the French Revolution*. The French authorities were suspicious of Grace, with good reason; she acted as a spy for the British, couriered letters between émigrés and counter-revolutionaries, and may have helped pass correspondence from Marie Antoinette to the Austrians. But it was her association

with the duke that brought her before Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety.

As the revolution grew more radical, even the Jacobin Duc d'Orléans and his associates found themselves under suspicion. Between spring 1793 and summer 1794, Grace claimed to have been questioned and imprisoned on several occasions. While held at the Récollets prison at Versailles in autumn 1793, she heard of the death of Marie Antoinette and the Duc d'Orléans. Then, on 1 January 1794, she was taken to the Carmes prison where (she claimed) she was held alongside Joséphine de Beauharnais, later to be Napoleon's wife.

## A censored life

How Grace managed to keep her head through the Terror is unknown: the final chapter of her *Journal* was censored by well-intentioned Victorian relations. After her release, she split her time between London and France before dying in 1823 while a guest in the mayor's house at Ville d'Avray.

Grace's *Journal* is one of the best firsthand accounts of the revolution in the English language. Since its publication in 1859, some have questioned the veracity of her account, partly on account of her scandalous history. Yet whatever the inaccuracies in her memoirs, there's no doubt this was a remarkable woman who lived a turbulent, fascinating life in a turbulent, fascinating era. **H**

**Hallie Rubenhold** is a historian and author.

Grace Dalrymple Elliott features as a character in her latest novel, set during the French Revolution, *The French Lesson* (Doubleday, 2016)

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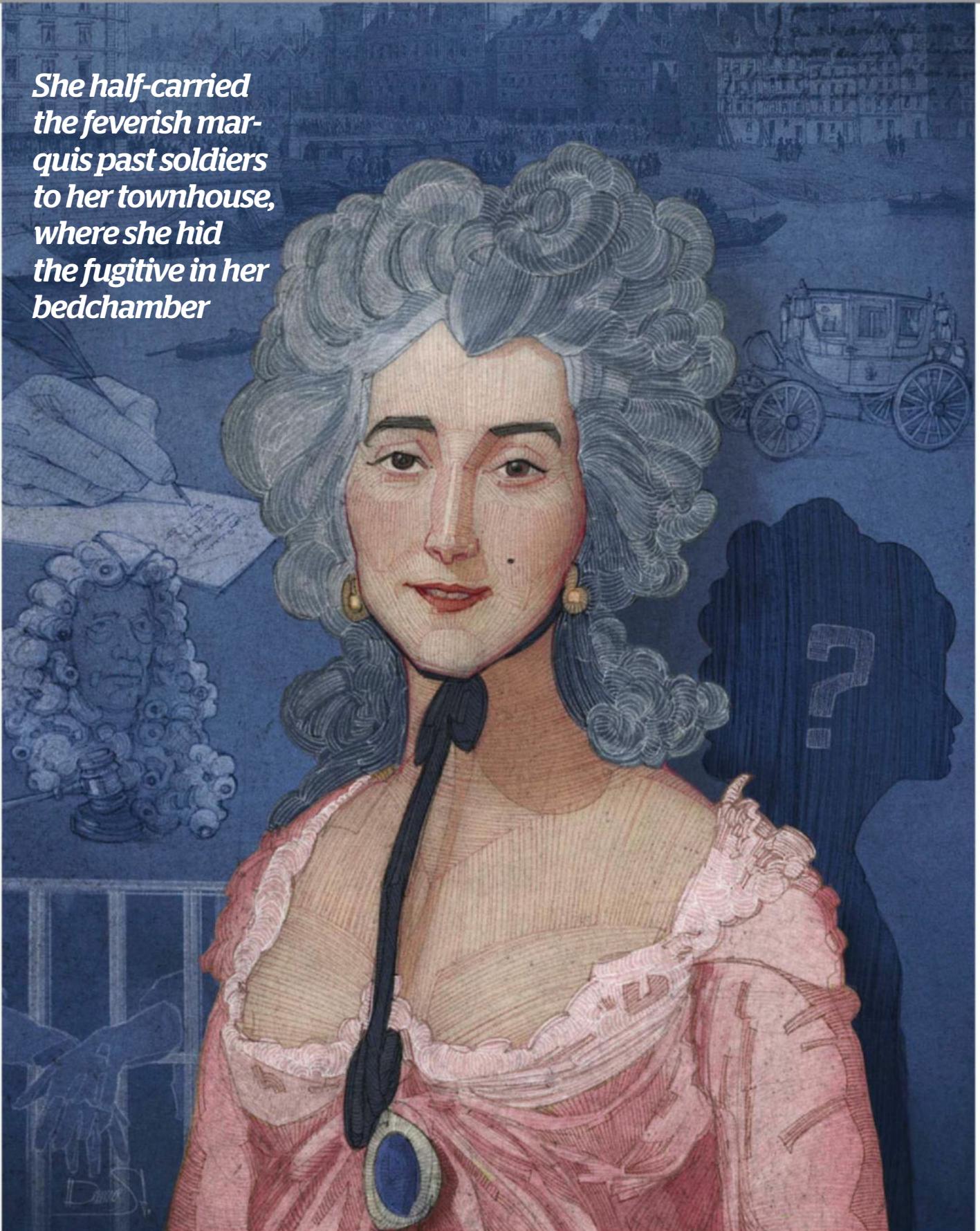
### BOOK

► **An Infamous Mistress** by Joanne Major and Sarah Murden (Pen and Sword, 2016)



## GRACE DALRYMPLE ELLIOTT

*She half-carried  
the feverish mar-  
quis past soldiers  
to her townhouse,  
where she hid  
the fugitive in her  
bedchamber*







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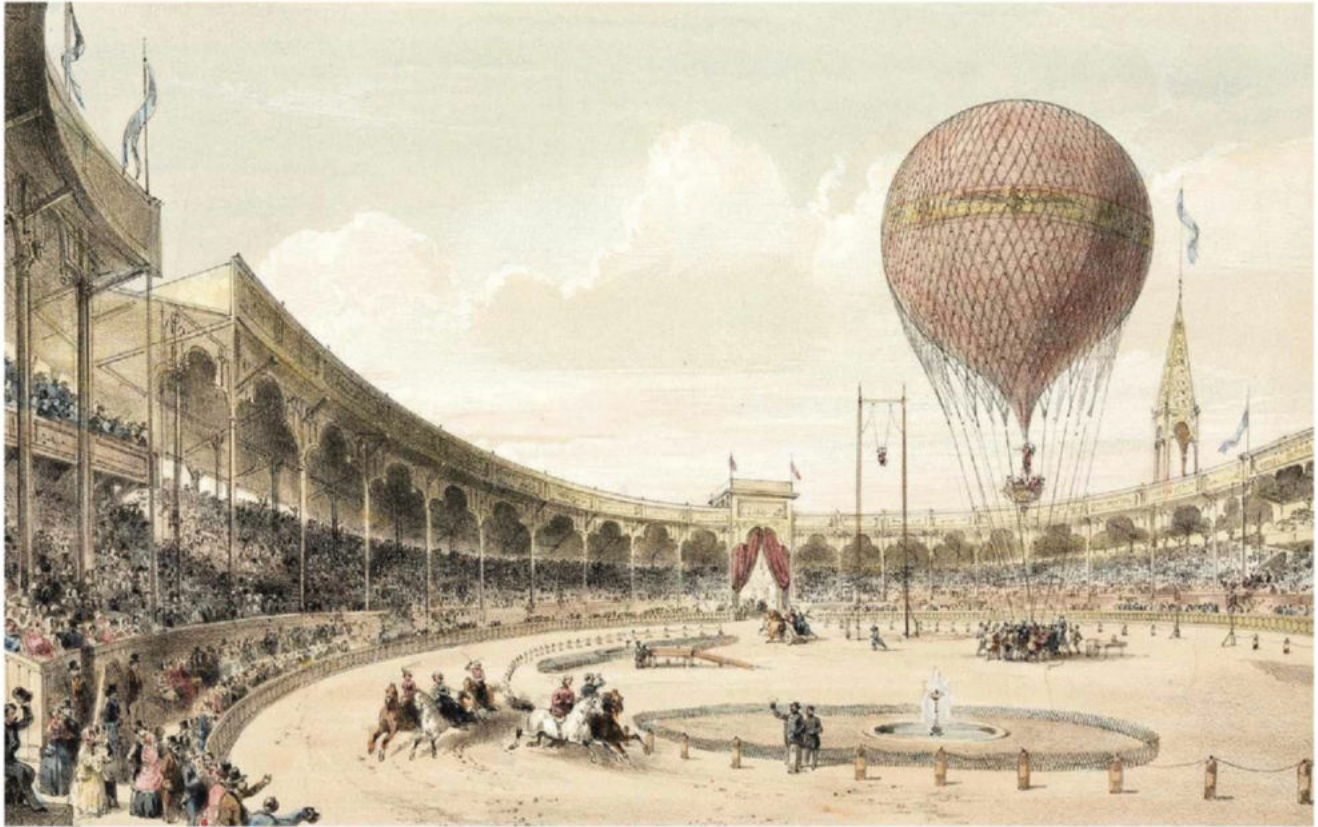
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## THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



A balloon ascends from a show in Paris in the 1840s. As railways, motor cars and aviation widened Europeans' horizons in the years before the First World War, science-fiction writers predicted that new technologies would change the world for the better

# EUROPE'S CENTURY OF PEACE AND PROGRESS

The period between Waterloo and the First World War laid the foundations for the modern world, so why do we insist on overlooking it?

**By Richard J Evans**



The 19th century has dropped off the radar. Nobody who actually lived in it survives, and it has become a rather remote period of history – unlike the 20th, which continues to obsess us with its wars, its crimes and its larger-than-life dictators. A lot of the history taught in schools about the

19th century is complicated and dull. Anyone who endured the tedium of trying to figure out the Eastern Question won't forget the experience in a hurry. As for the Schleswig-Holstein Question (for those who weren't listening in school, that was the argument between Austria, Germany and Denmark over the fate of two duchies in Jutland), the Victorian prime minister Lord Palmerston famously said: "Only three people have ever really understood the Schleswig-Holstein business – the Prince Consort, who is dead – a German professor, who has gone mad – and I, who have forgotten all about it."

Historians used to enthuse about the unification of Italy and the creation of the German empire, but since the Second World War these achievements have been regarded more as ominous portents of 20th-century dictatorships than as triumphs of the national ideal. We now locate the origins of the horrors of 20th-century mass murder in earlier texts such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* The weapons that caused such devastation in the conflicts of 1914–18 and 1939–45, including barbed wire and machine guns, were all invented or presaged before the First World War. Aerial bombardment was first recorded in the Italian conquest of Libya in 1911, submarines were foreseen by Jules Verne, and tanks were prophetically described in HG Wells's short story "The Land Ironclads". Scientific racist theory was disseminated by the writings of the 19th-century thinker Arthur de Gobineau. Social Darwinism began, if not with Darwin himself, then with his disciples such as Francis Galton and Karl Pearson. The vicious Balkan wars of the 1990s had their precedents in the violent Balkan wars of 1912–13.

Yet the 19th century is surely worth studying in its own right, not just as the seedbed of the 20th. Taking the historical period as stretching from 1815 to 1914 – because, of course, the actual 19th century (1801–1900) has no real meaning as a period apart from the merely chronological – the first feature that becomes apparent is the absence of major European wars. The 18th century saw repeated and often prolonged conflicts: the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), the Seven Years' War (1756–63), and the French Revolution-

ary and Napoleonic Wars that lasted from 1792 to 1815. Virtually every European state was involved at one time or another.

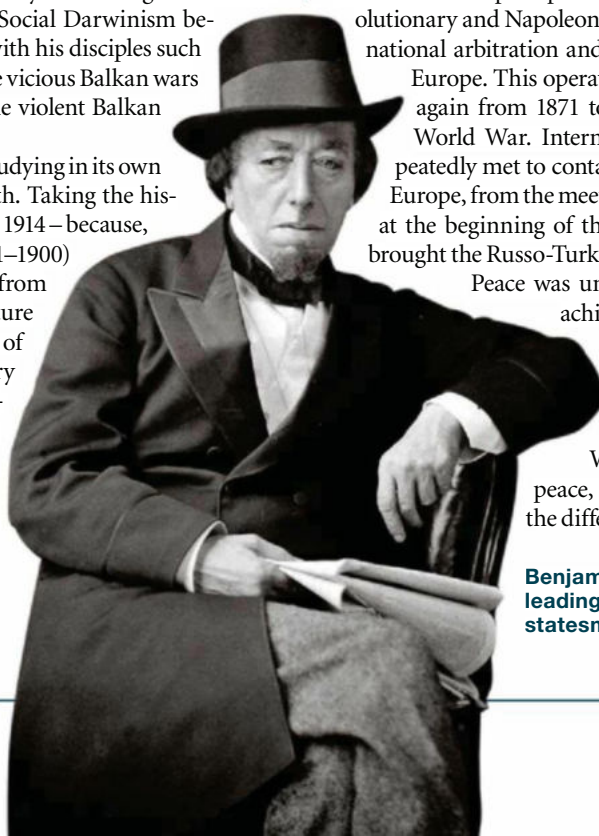
By contrast, in the century between Waterloo and the outbreak of the First World War, few wars were fought in Europe. Those that did occur were relatively limited in impact and duration, and did not involve more than a handful of European states: the Crimean War in 1853–56 between Britain, France, Turkey, Sardinia and Russia; the Wars of Italian Unification involving France, Austria and Piedmont-Sardinia; and the Wars of German Unification, which concluded with the conflict between the German states and France in 1870–71. There were brief wars between Russia and the Ottoman empire in 1828–29 and 1877–78 – but between 1700 and 1815 these two states had fought seven wars lasting nearly a quarter of a century between them.

The European wars of the 19th century were all fought over a limited time, for limited aims and between a limited number of participants. There was no attempt, as there was in the 20th century, to annihilate the enemy, destroy its state or exterminate its inhabitants.

In fact, the death rate of men in battle from 1815 to 1914 was seven times lower than that of the previous century, and lower by far than the death rates caused by the terrible and destructive wars of the years from 1914 to 1945. The explanation lies, in the first place, in the determination of European powers to avoid a repetition of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars by establishing a system of international arbitration and co-operation known as the Concert of Europe. This operated successfully up to the mid-1850s and again from 1871 to its breakdown on the eve of the First World War. International congresses and conferences repeatedly met to contain conflicts that threatened the peace of Europe, from the meetings that established the state of Belgium at the beginning of the 1830s, to the Congress of Berlin that brought the Russo-Turkish War to an end in 1878.

Peace was underpinned by British global hegemony achieved by the defeat of France and Spain at Trafalgar in 1805, and the consequent exclusion of extra-European rivalries between European states as a cause of conflicts within Europe itself. When these threatened to disturb the peace, the inevitable congress met to iron out the differences.

**Benjamin Disraeli was among the leading radical-conservative statesmen of his era**



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**A watercolour painting by Samuel Waugh shows a shipload of immigrants disembarking in New York City in the 1850s. Tens of millions of people migrated from Europe to other parts of the world between 1815 and 1914 – the largest mass migration in history**

At the same time, Europe was bound in to global trends, starting with the eruption of Mount Tambora, in the Dutch East Indies, that caused such widespread famine and distress in 1816 – ‘the year without a summer’ – and going on to the massive impact of the loss of Spain and Portugal’s colonies in the America in the 1820s. From well before the ‘Scramble for Africa’, colonial possessions exported European ways of living across the globe, building on the forcible subjugation of people native to other continents. Europe’s boundaries became porous: between 1815 and 1914 some 60 million people emigrated from the Old World – the largest mass migration in history. Only slowly did European migrants acquire a new identity and culture overseas. American goods, American inventions and American ideas began to flood into Europe, particularly towards the end of the period. By 1900, America – rather than France or Britain – seemed to be the future.

Where, then, does this leave the idea of Europe? Geography is of some help, obviously, but Europe is not a continent in any meaningful geographical sense, and in any case its eastern borders have always been vague, shifting and ill defined. It makes more sense to define Europe as a concept – realised in the 19th century in political, cultur-

al, social and economic terms – stretching from Britain in the west to Russia and the Balkans in the east, from Iceland in the north to Spain in the south. Of course, at one time or another historians have argued for the exceptionalism of Britain, or Russia, or Germany, or Spain. But the mere fact that the idea of a ‘special path’ to modernity, or indeed leading away from it, has been applied to so many different countries is evidence enough of its intellectual bankruptcy.

**I**n some senses, the 19th century was the age of the nation state. In fact, though, many leading individuals transcended national boundaries and enjoyed careers that were ‘transnational’ in character. Greek independence in the 1820s was led by Ioannis Kapodistrias, a former Russian foreign minister. Many Romanian nationalists were educated in France. Polish aristocratic rebels took part in many, if not most, of the liberal causes of the age, including the Italian Risorgimento (unification). And of course there were trends and phenomena common to many different countries. Most obvious were the waves of revolution that swept Europe in 1830 and 1848. Another was the model of the radical-conservative



## THE HISTORY ESSAY

The 19th century was the period when many of the pressing issues confronting our own world first made their appearance, most obviously the conquest of the environment



The last great auk was killed in 1844, presaging the mass species extermination through which we are living today

statesman who used revolutionary measures to stem the revolutionary tide after 1848, the best examples being Bismarck, Cavour, Disraeli and Napoleon III. Also notable was the imperialism of the late 19th century, with its turn to racist violence in places such as Namibia, the Congo, and British and French West Africa.

In many ways, the 19th century and its inhabitants now appear strange and remote. Religious belief was pervasive, and it is difficult today – in Europe, at least – to comprehend the passion and fanaticism behind the crusades of Balkan Christians against the Ottoman empire, or the shock with which Darwin's evolutionary theory was greeted in England. Even stranger was the dominance of masculine codes of conduct, with their duels, their full-length beards and top hats, and their sense of innate superiority over women, only gradually challenged by the emerging feminist movement.

An urban-industrial society such as our own has to make an effort of the imagination to realise that the vast majority of Europeans in the 19th century were peasants, who in some parts of the continent remained largely illiterate to the end of the period and who were, in many parts of Europe, only liberated from serfdom in the second half of the century.

In an era of doubt and anxiety about the future, it is important to recapture the pervasive sense of optimism that existed in the 19th century among the urban working and middle classes. Mass socialist movements looked forward to the creation of an egalitarian and non-exploitative society. Liberals anticipated a world

without war. Science-fiction writers, a new breed in themselves, projected the rise of new technologies that would solve many of the most pressing problems of humankind. At the turn of the 20th century, feminists all over Europe expected the cause of women's suffrage to triumph within a few years, just as there had been huge strides in the improvement of women's legal rights and educational opportunities. A press magnate boasted on 31 December 1900, the last day of the chronological 19th century, that his paper was "optimistic enough to believe that the 20th century... will meet and overcome all perils and prove to be the best that this steadily improving planet has ever seen".

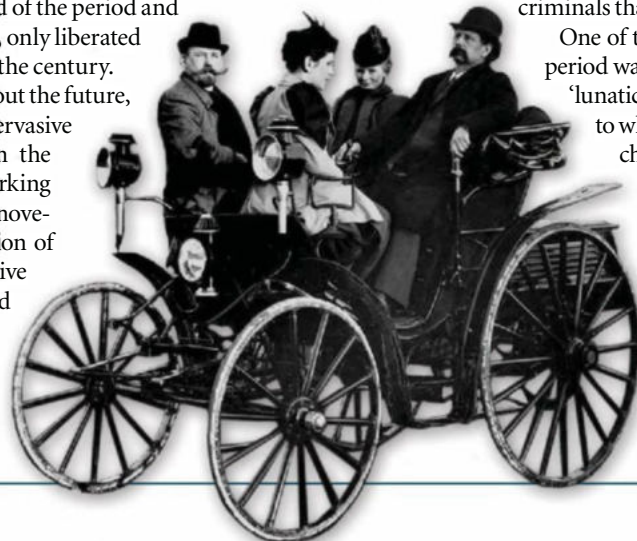
At the same time, the 19th century was the period when many of the pressing issues confronting our own world first made their appearance. Most obvious is the conquest of the environment, with large-scale deforestations and the elevation of coal and steam to the driving power sources of the age. This began the rapid rise in carbon emissions that are having such a potentially calamitous effect on the climate of the 21st century. Wild animals that populated Europe at the beginning of the period – including the bear, the lynx and the wolf – were by the end driven back to the margins. The great species extermination through which we are now living had already begun before 1914, most notably with the killing of the last great auk, a flightless seabird, in 1844.

Problems were also created by the invention and rise in sales of the motor car, the impact of which we are now struggling to keep in check. Traffic controls in pre-First World War Europe were rudimentary. As depictions of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand suggest, vehicles in Austria-Hungary drove on the left, while in France they drove on the right – in theory, at least. Traffic chaos seen in contemporary photographs suggests that nobody paid much attention to rules.

The changes made to Europe's penal system also bequeathed a mixed legacy. Up to mid-century and beyond, in most European countries criminal offenders were punished by public physical mutilation or execution in a way that became increasingly offensive to civilised sensibilities. Yet the building of massive prisons proved to be the source of social problems that remain unsolved today – imprisonment, it turned out, can be a more effective means of creating more criminals than of rehabilitating existing ones.

One of the key social policy developments of the period was the growing stigmatisation of people as 'lunatics'. The nature of the medical treatments to which such people were subjected may have changed since the 19th century, but sometimes seem little more successful now than they were then.

The massive changes that took place between 1815 and 1914 were nowhere more obvious than in the eco-



Karl Benz, designer of the world's first automobile, shown (right) in a Benz-Viktoria in 1893





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French suffrage campaigners overturn a ballot box in an illustration from the newspaper *Le Petit Journal* in 1908. By now, middle-class women in Europe widely believed that it was only a matter of time before they obtained the right to vote



## THE **HISTORY** ESSAY

We owe to the 19th century the creation of many of the words and concepts we use to analyse our own times: communism and conservatism, altruism and anarchism



Steam locomotives in production at the Horwich Works in Lancashire, around 1890. Industrialisation led to environmental and social problems, but also saw the emergence of a new class of industrial wage labourers who bolstered mass socialist movements

nomic and social spheres. The landed aristocracy increasingly had to share their power and wealth with the new industrial and professional middle classes, while the emergence of a vast new class of industrial wage labourers provided the foundation for the mass socialist movements of the latter decades of the century. And towards the end of the period, the new phenomenon of hydroelectric power launched rapid industrial development in northern Italy and Sweden, which bypassed the earlier, dirtier stages of the industrial revolution.

All of these massive changes were, of course, registered and recorded by contemporaries, who left us a wonderful legacy of memoirs, diaries, letters, newspaper reports, magazine articles and fictional descriptions of the times through which they lived. This was, after all, the great age of the realist novel, when writers ranging from Dickens to Dostoyevsky and Balzac to Bremer chronicled the institutions and conventions of the age through vivid depictions of individual characters.

Finally, we owe to the 19th century the creation of many of the

words and concepts we use to analyse our own times: communism and conservatism, altruism and anarchism. Marxism may be dead, but many of the other ideologies developed through the century are still very much alive. As literacy spread, the railways brought books, magazines and newspapers to the smallest rural communities. Schools were built to teach the three Rs to the masses, and ordinary people began to mobilise politically as never before. The 19th century began talking to itself – and if we listen hard enough we can hear it talking to us, too. ■

**Richard J Evans** is president of Wolfson College, Cambridge, provost of Gresham College, London, and former Regius professor of history at the University of Cambridge

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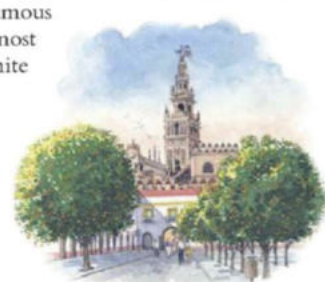


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## OUR FIRST WORLD WAR

# The hope and the horror

In part 29 of his personal testimony series, **Peter Hart** takes us back to October 1916, when the optimism of high command contrasted with the terror endured by frontline soldiers. Peter will be tracing the experiences of 20 people who lived through the First World War – via interviews, letters and diary entries – as its centenary progresses.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES ALBON



### Sir Douglas Haig

Haig had served in the army for some 30 years when, in December 1915, he was appointed to command the British Expeditionary Force on the western front. By June 1916, he had overseen the planning for the battle of the Somme.

**General Haig bore a huge responsibility for the battle of the Somme. As the man in command of the British Expeditionary Force he had – in conjunction with the French commander-in-chief General Joseph Joffre – set the overall parameters of the battle. He then supervised the conduct of his subordinate generals during the terrible fighting of the summer of 1916. In early autumn, and with winter fast approaching, he reviewed the situation on the Somme in a letter to King George V on 5 October 1916.**

“The troops see that they are slowly but surely destroying the German armies in their front, and that their enemy is much less capable of defence than he was even a few weeks ago. Indeed there have been instances in which the

enemy on a fairly wide front (1,400 yards) has abandoned his trench the moment our infantry appeared! On the other hand, our divisions seem to have become almost twice as efficient as they were before going into the battle, notwithstanding the drafts which they have received.

Once a division has been engaged, all ranks quickly get to know what fighting really means, the necessity for keeping close to our barrage to escape loss and ensure success, and many other important details which can only be really appreciated by troops under fire! The men, too, having beaten the Germans once, gain confidence in themselves and feel no shadow of doubt that they can go on beating him.

**Haig also reported the results of an interview he had**

**conducted with Raymond Poincaré, the president of France.**

“He asked my views about continuing the fight. I pointed out that we had already broken through all the Enemy’s prepared lines and that now only extemporised defences stood between us and the Bapaume ridge: moreover, the enemy had suffered much in men, in material, and in *morale*. If we rested even for a month, the enemy would be able to strengthen his defences, to recover his equilibrium, to make good deficiencies, and, worse still, would regain the initiative! The longer we rested, the more difficult would our problem again become, so in my opinion we must continue to press the enemy to the utmost of our power.

**In fact, the German army still had enormous reserves of strength, and many of the reports received from the front proved overly optimistic in their nature. The Germans would fight on.**



### John Palmer

John joined the army as a regular in 1910. He served as a signaller with the Royal Field Artillery on the western front.

**John certainly would not have agreed with Haig’s optimistic assessment. Despite his wounds and obvious symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, he had once more been sent to rejoin his old unit, the 118th Battery, 26th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, in the living hell of the battle of the Somme.**

“When we first came out, it meant much to us to lose a few chums. Today we are hardened to it. We have no feeling, just a numb instinct that our turn will come next. We watch the infantry in the trenches being goaded to go over the top,

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The corpses of German soldiers lie where they fell in woodland during the battle of the Somme in October 1916



the poor devils being dragged out of the dugouts, perhaps with a revolver to the head.

The old ally of the Germans appeared: rain. Everything just sank into the ground. We were finding difficulty in getting shells up to the guns. Mules were loaded with shells and stores; they became heavy casualties, and were strewn about in the shell holes, which were now full of water. It was difficult to walk even a few yards for the mud. As one leg was pulled out, the other was just sucked down, making progress almost impossible.

I had never experienced such conditions. The heavy shelling we experienced at times, the fatigue and the discomfort of the soaking wet clothing, the sight of so many dead bodies, the continuous laying and mending of the telephone wires – all this was sapping my strength and resistance. So many battles, attacks, counter-attacks, the sending over the top of the infantry – who would have had difficulty in reaching the enemy trench even without any opposition – all this was but a daily routine.

High Wood, Mametz Wood, Delville Wood, Death Valley: how all these places haunted us. I used to traverse a footpath through Mametz Wood. The first time I made my way there I noticed a German arm and hand sticking up through the path. As the days passed, this hand became more and more swollen and bloated. At night my wire would get caught around it and I had to disentangle it. When we first came out, such a thing as this would have horrified me, but now I was no longer human.

I am afraid we were all becoming more like wild animals each day. Not only that, my nerve was going gradually. No longer could I go out to mend a wire and not care less about the shells that came over. Now I was dead scared, and felt that at any time I should 'stop one'. I had lost several of my chums while we were out together, and two officers. In fact, some of them did not even like the idea of going out with me as they always said that I was too lucky to get hurt, but that whoever was with me was doomed.

***"The first month was spent in solitary confinement. I was not allowed a mattress, but slept on the bare plank boards"***



### Harold Bing

Born in Croydon in 1897, Harold was brought up a pacifist. When war broke out in 1914 he was 16 years old. On turning 18 he pleaded exemption from conscription which was, after several hearings, denied. He was then interned for refusing to serve.

**As an 'absolutist' conscientious objector who refused to assist the war effort in any way, Harold had been sentenced to three months' hard labour. He was initially incarcerated in Wormwood Scrubs prison.**

“The first month was spent in solitary confinement in the cell – that is to say, one got out only for the half-hour exercise each day. Of course, we were not allowed to talk to anyone else; we marched round the exercise yard at least a yard apart, and we'd several warders supervising to see that we didn't communicate. Apart from that, the whole time was spent in the cell, except for a short period of chapel.

For the most part I was engaged – when I was in the cell – in making or repairing mail bags. At the end of the first month you go into a big workshop where you're working together on making mail bags or picking oakum or making rope, whatever it may be. Prison work is very repetitive, very boring, and seems to be designed chiefly to keep one occupied with work as uninteresting as it can be – most of these jobs could have been done much more quickly and cheaply by machinery.

**Bing's prison cell was plain and simple.**

I was in a cell by myself the whole time. The cell was about 6 feet by 13 feet, with one small window

above one's head so that you couldn't see out of it – except by standing on your stool. There was a plank bed that stood up against the wall during the day, put down at night with a mattress. For the first month you were not allowed a mattress, but slept on the bare plank boards. At the end of a month you were given a mattress. In addition, you had two or three blankets and a rough pillow.

There was also a small table and stool; the chamber pot; the can for water and a metal bowl in which to wash; a little shelf on which one kept one's knife, spoon and fork, a pot of salt and any photographs. One was normally not permitted to have more than two or three photographs, which must be of family members or close relatives. In the door there was a little hole with a cover on the outside so that the warder could spy on you. You had the sense of being watched the whole time. ■

Peter Hart is the oral historian at the Imperial War Museum

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# Wo



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# men **pioneers** in **parliament**

As Theresa May gets to grips with life in 10 Downing Street, **Julie V Gottlieb** traces the trials and tribulations of Britain's first female MPs

One striking aspect of British political life in the aftermath of the EU referendum is the prominence of women in the political sphere. Women are in, or have

challenged for, leadership positions at all points of the political spectrum. Within three weeks of polling day, the Conservative party had appointed its second female prime minister, Theresa May. Angela Eagle briefly threw her hat into the ring for the leadership of the Labour party. Nicola Sturgeon and Leanne Wood head the SNP and Plaid Cymru in Scotland and Wales respectively. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Hillary Clinton is the favourite to win November's US presidential election – and become the most powerful person in the world.

Some who have mused about this feminisation of politics have suggested that it was evidence of women coming to the rescue – cleaning up a man-made mess, their 'safe pairs of hands' healing wounds inflicted by what was a testosterone-fuelled referendum

**Canvassing at the kitchen door**  
Nancy Astor, who in 1919 became the first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons, canvasses in her constituency of Plymouth-Sutton in the 1920s. Until 1928 only women aged over 30, and who met a property qualification, were allowed to vote  
ABOVE (IN HEADLINE): A 'Votes for Women' badge from c1908



## Women in politics

campaign. This line of argument alludes to women's innate diplomacy, pacifism and motherly conciliation (though playing upon this latter quality hardly did Angela Leadsom's bid to become leader of the Conservative party any favours).

But women's rise to positions of leadership isn't as historically unprecedented as you might imagine. In fact, the story of women's politicisation – and the accompanying reaction – began early in the 20th century, in the aftermath of war and the suffrage movement.

Suffragists and suffragettes had done much to place votes for women on the agenda, but it was only in February 1918, as the First World War entered its closing stages, that partial women's suffrage was achieved. The Representation of the People Act 1918 granted the vote to women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification, and to all men over the age of 21 (the equal franchise was granted in 1928). The vote was the reward for women's war service and patriotism, though due recognition should be paid to the leaders of the suffrage movement.



For all that, the move provoked a deluge of criticism. Many Britons were appalled by the prospect of women outnumbering men at the polls. Others assumed that women's home-bound priorities would emasculate national and, in particular, foreign policy.

### Women in the house

Concerns were also raised about the activities of an influential and sensationalised minority of feminists, dubbed the 'Peacettes', who advocated a negotiated peace. In 1917 William Burdett-Coutts MP argued that women's suffrage "would not be in the interests of the State from the point of view of its international position... So far as war was possible and might be necessary for the safety of the nation woman could never be a complete unit of responsibility in the national life."

The International Congress of Women at The Hague in 1915 would be the birthplace of the numerically small but influential Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Though the WILPF would never become a mass movement, feminist internationalism and the development of the role of women as the world's natural pacifists motivated women's political engagement across party lines between the wars. As feminist pacifist Evelyn Sharp put it: "Most people still think of the women's vote as being concerned only with their home interests and their industrial interests," yet "women are humanly as much concerned with keeping the world at peace as men are," and "home politics and foreign politics overlap, and what affects the one must some extent affect the other."

Though some 8.5 million women now had the vote, it was not until November 1918 that the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act passed, granting women the right to stand for parliament. Herbert Asquith summed up the prevailing attitude to this legislation: "Having extended the franchise to women, parliament could not logically debar them from membership of the House of Commons. They had swallowed the camel, and ought not to strain at the gnat."

When a general election was called for 14 December 1918, it gave women precious

little time to mount a campaign for election. Of the 17 who took up the challenge, only Sinn Féin's Countess Markievicz was victorious (though she didn't take her seat in parliament). For the other 16 women candidates – among them Christabel Pankhurst, leader of the Women's Social and Political Union, who founded the Women's Party and stood as its candidate in Smethwick – the day would end in defeat.

When a female MP finally did enter parliament – after winning a by-election for Plymouth-Sutton in 1919 – she wasn't a



### Eleanor Rathbone

In 1929 Rathbone became MP for the Combined English Universities seat as an Independent. She was associated with 'New' or 'Welfare' feminism, her greatest achievement being the passing of the Family Allowances Act in 1945. An early critic of the Nazi regime, she promoted the rescue of refugees from Hitler's Europe.

### Katherine Stewart-Murray, the Duchess of Atholl

The first woman MP in Scotland, the Conservative member for Kinross and West Perthshire (1923–38) had opposed women's suffrage before the First World War. She became known as the 'Red Duchess' for her active stand against fascism in Spain and Nazism in Germany.



**“There was still something slightly freakish about a woman MP. I saw male colleagues point me out as though I were a sort of giant panda”**

Conservative MP Thelma Cazalet-Keir

iconoclastic star of the suffrage movement but an American-born Conservative viscountess and product of the social elite. Nancy Astor was a complex figure, reactionary and prejudiced on many issues. But she defined herself as a natural-born feminist. “I find women honest, practical, disinterested and sometimes really gifted with vision,” she said.

Astor readily accepted her role as the voice for women. In her maiden speech she declared: “I do not want you to look on your lady member as a fanatic or lunatic. I am simply trying to speak for hundreds of women and children throughout the country who cannot speak for themselves.”

### Post-suffrage progress

The mainstream parties reorganised and modernised for this post-suffrage age of mass democracy, acutely aware that women’s votes would be decisive. All three had previously mobilised women: the Conservatives’ mixed-sex Primrose League (from 1883) had been followed by the Women’s Liberal Federation (from 1886) and the Women’s Labour League in 1906. In 1919 the Tories established the Women’s Unionist Associations (later the Women’s Conservative Association), while Labour created the Women’s Section.

Though all three women’s party organisations were highly effective, and provided women with forums in which to express their concerns, sex segregation assured women’s inevitable marginalisation within the parties as a whole. Men remained very firmly in their positions as the power brokers and leaders.

Between 1918 and 1939, 36 women became MPs. Their rarity brought them celebrity. The feminist-leaning Conservative Thelma Cazalet-Keir, an MP from 1931, recalled that “when I entered the House there was still something slightly freakish about a woman MP, and I frequently saw male colleagues

point me out to their friends as though I were a sort of giant panda”.

They may have been few in number but women were soon making their voices heard in parliament – and not, as many of the sceptics might have expected, solely on domestic issues. They made telling interventions in defence and foreign policy debates, especially during the crisis-ridden 1930s. Labour’s Ellen Wilkinson, the Conservative renegade Duchess of Atholl and the Independent Eleanor Rathbone made up a formidable female phalanx in defence of the victims of fascism across Europe.

They achieved all this despite the fact that parliament made little allowances for the

competing pressures on their time. A disproportionate number of early women MPs were childless, and many unmarried – a fact that inspired the label Britain’s ‘spinster MPs’. Many fulfilled the role of ‘social mother’ rather than the biological one. Rathbone never married and had no children, but she was the greatest champion of married women and the introduction of family allowances.

Nor did the paltry number of women parliamentarians alleviate the (mostly) male anxieties that women’s suffrage would spell disaster for Great Britain. Women would mother the nation, infantilise and emasculate the country, and create a nanny (or governess) state in their own feminine image – such were the fears, illustrated well by the cartoons of WK Haselden in the *Daily Mirror*.

The debates leading up to equal franchise in 1928, known as the ‘Flapper’s Vote’ (after the name given to a new breed of women determined to flout society’s conventions), were permeated by fears that men would be engulfed by a generation of frivolous young socialites poised to undermine the decorum of parliament and the gravity of politics.

Variations of these same themes continued in the 1930s and beyond during the debate about appeasement with Hitler’s Germany. Harold Nicolson, National Labour MP and anti-appeaser, was sure that women were responsible for the nation’s self-immobilisation, in the form of the Munich Agreement. “I expect that the historians of our decline and fall will say that we were done the moment we gave the women the vote,” he intoned.

Nicolson probably never envisioned that, within 80 years, not one but two women would have climbed to the very top of Britain’s political ladder. Neither Margaret Thatcher nor Theresa May fulfil narrow gender stereotypes. They are very different women from one another and from many other women of their time – and, in many ways, have little in common with the politics of feminism. Yet, in their achievements, we hear echoes of the feminist aspirations – and the fears of feminisation – that were first aired almost a century ago. **II**

**Julie V Gottlieb** is reader in modern history at the University of Sheffield. Her latest book is *‘Guilty Women’, Foreign Policy, and Appeasement in Inter-war Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

### ON THE PODCAST

Julie V Gottlieb discusses Britain’s first female MPs on our weekly podcast:  
► [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts)



**Ellen Wilkinson**  
‘Red Ellen’, so dubbed for both her hair colour and hard-left politics, became a Labour MP in 1924, lost her seat in 1931, and returned as MP for Jarrow in 1935, leading the Jarrow hunger marchers. In the 1930s she was another outspoken critic of fascism. Appointed minister of education in 1945, she died in office.



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# BOOKS



David Reynolds and Kristina Spohr, editors of a new book about Cold War summits. "You need to look at summitry to explain why the Cold War ended the way it did, without a major conflict in the heart of Europe," says David Reynolds

Photography by Ian Farrell



## INTERVIEW / KRISTINA SPOHR AND DAVID REYNOLDS

*"This rather unfashionable study shows what happens when leaders click"*

*Kristina Spohr and David Reynolds talk to Rob Attar about their new edited volume on superpower statecraft in a dangerous world*

IAN FARRELL



## PROFILE KRISTINA SPOHR AND DAVID REYNOLDS

Kristina Spohr is associate professor of international history at the London School of Economics. Her previous books include *The Global Chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the Reshaping of the International Order* (OUP, 2016), about whom she has made a film for ZDF TV in Germany. David Reynolds is professor of international history at Cambridge. He is the author of numerous books and is a regular documentary presenter on BBC TV and radio.

### IN CONTEXT

Summits in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily involving the leaders of the US, USSR, and East and West Germany, aimed to tackle two thorny Cold War issues: the nuclear arms race and the German situation. The Reagan-Gorbachev summits of the 1980s resulted in a real improvement of relations. Then, as the Eastern Bloc collapsed from 1989, Helmut Kohl, Mikhail Gorbachev and George HW Bush worked to ensure a peaceful transition from communism. This book also covers Nixon's 1972 visit to Mao's China.

### The summits only really got going halfway through the Cold War. Why?

**David Reynolds:** The word 'summit' was introduced into common parlance in the 1950s by Winston Churchill, who wanted to have "parleys at the summit" to defuse the Cold War, but in the 1950s and 1960s the confrontation was still too hot. It was not until the era of détente that leaders felt they ought to meet to try to develop mutual understanding, because nuclear weapons were just too dangerous to play around with.

**Kristina Spohr:** Another strand here is the German question at the heart of the Cold War in Europe. West Germany would not *de jure* recognise East Germany as a separate independent state because it wanted to keep open the option of reunification. It was not until the period of détente that they began to meet, with the West German chancellor Willy Brandt travelling by train to East Germany. This was really, as Brandt said, to "get a smell of each other".

**DR:** This was a huge icebreaker at a time when there was a fundamental division between the two Germanies.

**KS:** At one point during a meeting in Erfurt, Willy Brandt went to a window and outside was a crowd shouting: "Willy! Willy! Willy!" They meant Brandt, rather than the East German leader Willi Stoph. This spontaneous reaction by its own people totally shocked the East German regime.

### The locations of summits were clearly important. How were they chosen?

**DR:** Sometimes there were sequences of summits, such as under Nixon and Reagan, moving from one place to another. So Nixon went to Moscow in 1972 – the first time an American president had been to the Soviet capital – but the idea was that Brezhnev

would then come to Washington. Yet location also involved issues of precedence and privilege, and that's why, for example, Reagan and Gorbachev had their first meeting in Geneva, a neutral city.

**KS:** Some of these summits were also reconnaissance trips. Each leader was trying to find out what the other's place was like. At other times it was better to choose a remote location. In 1979 there was a summit in Guadeloupe, so far away from the media limelight that it was almost in hiding.

### What typically happened at a summit?

**KS:** That depended very much on the summit. At Guadeloupe, for example, there were hours of meetings between US president Jimmy Carter, UK prime minister Jim Callaghan, German chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. They discussed world politics and security affairs, but there was also an informal aspect – they went snorkelling, sailing and jogging. It looked like a holiday – the press talked about the "swimming pool summit" – but the discussions were incredibly intense.

**DR:** This partly also depended on the health of the leaders. For much of this period Brezhnev was a basket case: he'd had heart attacks and all sorts of problems. Everything had to be done from prompt cards. For the 1979 Vienna summit [aimed at limiting nuclear weapons] Carter was told the whole thing had to be planned in advance because if Brezhnev had to do anything spontaneous he would completely blow it. It was very different when dealing with a leader such as Gorbachev, who was quick witted and argumentative.

### The summits were very big, symbolic occasions. Was that the most important aspect of them?

**DR:** In our book we try to emphasise the symbolic and the substantive moments,

*"News management was vital. It was possible to control the media in a way that's not true now"*

because both really matter. Undoubtedly the symbolism was very important in the 1988 Moscow summit. Five years earlier Reagan had decried the Soviet Union as "the evil empire"; then, in Red Square, he was asked if he still believed that was true. He said: "Oh, I was talking about another time, another era." That was very powerful. These opportunities for leaders to meet could be hugely important in how the world saw international relations. But substance also mattered. Reagan and Gorbachev just clicked, which had massive implications.

**KS:** I also think about the Kohl-Gorbachev summit in July 1990. They had a very formal meeting in Moscow, then Gorbachev invited the West German leader to fly with him to the Caucasus and visit his *dacha* [holiday home]. No other western leader had been invited there, and though this summit was all about substance – how to wrap up German unification and the issue of Red Army withdrawal from Germany – it was also a very symbolic moment. The leaders went together to lay wreaths at Stavropol in remembrance of the Second World War, and the two of them bonded. They felt they had a historic moment in which they could change the world.

### The summits were often played out in front of a huge media apparatus. How important was public image?

**DR:** It was very important in the 1972 Nixon-Mao summit. There was a belief in China that at the 1954 Geneva conference the then American secretary of state John Foster Dulles had refused to shake the hand of Chinese premier Zhou Enlai – a serious snub. It's not clear whether the story was true, but the important thing is that Nixon was absolutely convinced he had to deal with it. So when Air Force One lands in Beijing, Nixon came down the steps with his arm straight out the whole way – because the one thing he is going to do is shake Zhou's hand to show this is now a different era. The timings were arranged for American primetime television, for the evening news bulletins. You had to hit CBS, NBC and ABC, and if you did so, you got the message across. This was a time when news management was vital but it was also possible to control in a way that's not true now.

**KS:** You could tell a similar story about the Kohl-Gorbachev meeting in the Caucasus. The Germans took a huge media entourage. There were photographs of Gorbachev and





Dubbed “the swimming pool summit”, the 1979 Guadeloupe meeting saw the four leaders – left to right: Helmut Schmidt, James Callaghan, Jimmy Carter and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing – go snorkelling and sailing. But discussions were “incredibly intense”

Kohl walking by the river in the mountains, then sitting on tree trunks in their woolly jumpers. *Pravda* [the official Soviet newspaper] called it the “summit without ties”. It looked really informal, but it was media theatre too: the images said that these were two people getting on really well.

#### To what extent did summitry bring about the end of the Cold War?

**DR:** If you try to play counterfactuals, the Soviet system was clearly increasingly rickety in the 1980s but probably would have carried on for an indefinite period of time. Gorbachev was undoubtedly a crucial element: mixing vision, impatience for change, and a naivety about what would happen. None of the changes in eastern Europe would have occurred if he hadn’t signalled that they wouldn’t be crushed by the Red Army.

But summits also matter. Reagan and Gorbachev shared a basic belief that the nuclear arms race could be curbed. In the book we emphasise the importance of the 1987 Washington summit, which was the first time the superpowers actually reduced their nuclear arsenals, showing the arms race was not going to spiral out of control. We also emphasise that German reunification, potentially a huge tinderbox, was handled by leaders in a responsible way. Here are two really important moments in which you need to look at summitry to explain why the Cold War ended the way it did, without a major conflict in the heart of Europe.

**KS:** We must remember that the Chinese employed force [at Tiananmen Square in June 1989] and that there was a fear that the same might happen in East Germany. Even at the Malta summit in December 1989, George HW Bush was still trying to get assurances from Gorbachev that the Soviets would not apply force. At the time the Berlin Wall came down, Bush had written in his notebook: “Tiananmen, Tiananmen, Tiananmen”. There was a great fear of the Red Army being let loose in East Germany. A lot of Americans were asking Bush why he wasn’t jumping up and down on the Berlin Wall; he said that he didn’t want to thrust two fingers in Gorbachev’s face.

#### Were leaders at the summits aiming to end the Cold War or just cope with it?

**KS:** We see three separate phases of summitry. The first, in the early 1970s, was really about thawing the Cold War; the end point – for example, German reunification – just seemed so far away. There was a real fear at the time that World War Three could break out. Then, in the mid-1970s, there were ideas of how to make the Cold War liveable. After that, though, superpower relations got much worse, sparking a second Cold War. Finally, we get to our third part, transcending the Cold War. It started with the creative spark that happened with Gorbachev and Reagan and opened up new perspectives. They didn’t think, though, that the Cold War would be over in five years. They were really focusing on curbing nuclear weapons.

*“The Kohl-Gorbachev ‘summit without ties’ in 1990 looked really informal – but it was media theatre”*

**DR:** We often asked each other: what did X think was going to happen in the Cold War in the next 20 or 30 years? What is clear is that the events of 1989–91 were amazing for most people. It’s fascinating to look at what happens when leaders suddenly see doors opening in all directions. How do they respond? This was a period of historic change, like 1815, 1918 and 1945 – except it didn’t involve a major war. The huge political and social changes occurred largely peacefully because, we argue, they were managed cooperatively by the leaders at the top. What intrigues us, in this rather unfashionable study of summitry, is what happens when leaders click, and how much they can actually shape history in a positive way. **II**



**Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970–1990** edited by Kristina Spohr and David Reynolds (Oxford University Press, 288 pages, £35)



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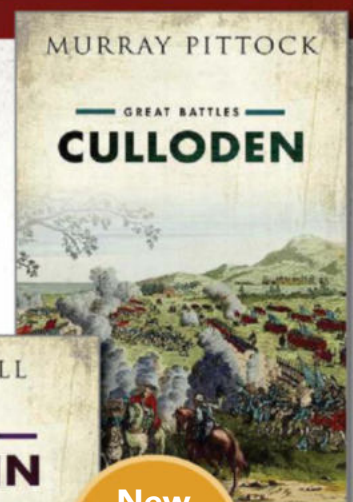
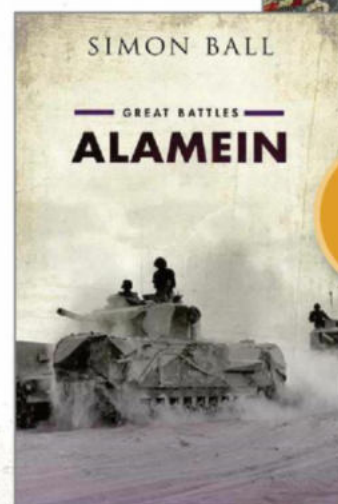


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## REVIEWS



Far-right Freikorps troops surround a captured socialist during the overthrow of the short-lived Bavaria Soviet Republic in 1919. "Political instability and violence in those years were intimately bound up with wartime defeat," says Alexander Watson

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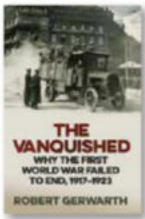
## Why war spawned war

**ALEXANDER WATSON** on an insightful analysis of the conflicts that continued to blight Europe after the First World War

### The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923

by Robert Gerwarth

Allen Lane, 464 pages, £25



In two years' time, centennial commemorations will mark the end of the First World War. Participants might do well to read Robert Gerwarth's revelatory book, which highlights

the fact that, in much of Europe, November 1918 brought no peace. Across central and eastern Europe, defeated empires dissolved, ethnic conflict flared and paramilitary adherents of new, extremist ideologies employed violence to enforce their

utopian visions. This fighting and repression cost countless lives and fatefully undermined the foundations of what the victorious western Allies hoped would be a new democratic order.

Gerwarth contends that it was not primarily the First World War – frequently portrayed, in the American diplomat and historian George F Kennan's words, as "the great seminal catastrophe" – but, rather, the revolutionary years of 1917–23 that set Europe on the road to the mid-20th century's horrors of totalitarian states, global conflagration and genocide.

Political instability and violence in those years were intimately bound up with wartime defeat. The 'vanquished' of Gerwarth's title refers to the obvious losers of 1918 – Germany, Austria-

Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman empire – but also to peoples living in states defeated by the Central Powers during the First World War.

The Russian empire was the first great power to fall, and Gerwarth explains how its collapse in 1917 initiated a cycle of violence and radicalisation that would spread across the continent. Revolution in February deposed the tsar and shocked the world but brought neither peace nor security. Eight months later, Lenin's Bolsheviks launched a successful coup, bought time by signing a humiliating peace with the Central Powers and set about cementing their control. By 1921 and the end of their campaigns against western-Allies-backed monarchists, rebellious peasants and non-Russian nationalists on the empire's peripheries, their wars had killed more than 3 million people – more than Russia's losses during the First World War years.

In central Europe, humiliation at defeat by the western Allies and intense fear of Bolshevism combined to produce violent reaction. In Germany, even the moderate socialists who took over at the end of the First World War called in the army to prevent a far-left coup on the lines of the Russian model. Also deployed were Freikorps – far-right paramilitary units composed of embittered, anti-Semitic students and demobilised officers who blamed defeat in the world war on betrayal by leftists at home. Their operations, extending to the Baltic, were vengeful and brutal.

Gerwarth skilfully reveals the links between defeated states' political crises and the cross-border contacts of the leftist and far-right radicals, portraying a vast international ideological conflict. A pattern emerges of leftist agitation, uprising and, where revolutionaries seized power, repressive 'red terror', countered by far-right paramilitarism and even bloodier 'white terror', claiming

**Gerwarth skilfully portrays a vast international ideological conflict**





## COMING SOON...

"Next issue, I'll be talking to Catherine Merridale about *Lenin on the Train*, her account of the communist leader's extraordinary journey from Zurich to Petrograd in 1917. Plus, our experts will be reviewing the latest books, including a history of violence and a biography of Winston Churchill." *Matt Elton, reviews editor*

thousands of lives. Hate-filled activists on both sides sought to 'purify' communities and avenge defeat by annihilating enemies and punishing 'traitors'.

This left-right conflict raged against the backdrop of one of the most fundamental geopolitical shifts ever undergone in Europe. Centuries-old multinational empires were being replaced with a modern type of polity, the 'nation-state', rooted in an ideology of ethnic homogeneity. As Gerwarth argues, US president Woodrow Wilson had, through his advocacy of national self-determination, been instrumental in this development. This principle proved ill-suited to the highly diverse lands to which it was applied. Worse still, implementation was

***This is an important, compelling book with a fascinating and chilling narrative***

partial, with discrimination against the war's losers. In Hungary, Austria and Germany, revisionism became entrenched while the new states fought over borders and persecuted their large minorities. The horror was greatest in Turkey and Greece, which saw war, vicious ethnic cleansing and the internationally sanctioned deportations of 600,000 people.

Within his fascinating and chilling narrative Gerwarth may understate the transformative influence of the prior 'seminal catastrophe'. Already in 1914-15, the war had inflamed nationalism and featured vicious ethnic persecution on the eastern front and of Armenians in the Ottoman empire. The colossal effort required to mobilise for 'total war' in 1914-16 made defeat particularly crushing, and all-embracing warfare disastrously blurred combatant-civilian boundaries. Nonetheless, this is an important, compelling book. Gerwarth reveals how the forgotten postwar violence comprised a key step on Europe's descent into darkness. **II**

Alexander Watson is professor of history at Goldsmiths, University of London

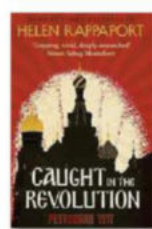
## Red Russia's birthing pains

**DANIEL BEER** on a fascinating view of the Russian revolution, as seen through the eyes of expats in St Petersburg

### Caught in the Revolution

by Helen Rappaport

Hutchinson, 448 pages, £25



Told through the eyes of a colourful cast of expatriates in Petrograd (St Petersburg) in 1917, Helen Rappaport's book is a gripping narrative account of the implosion of the tsarist state and

the birth of the Soviet regime. By skilfully weaving together the eyewitness testimonies of journalists, diplomats, governesses, businessmen, doctors and engineers, Rappaport thrusts the reader into the very cockpit of the Russian Revolution.

Men and women such as British ambassador George Buchanan and American journalist Florence Harper witnessed the rumours, the plotting, the unravelling economy, the famished workers first pleading and then rioting for bread, the collapse of law and order and the transformation of Russia's great imperial capital into a "red madhouse". Rappaport edits their perspectives into an almost cinematic vision of the "vortex of violence" that was engulfing the city.

Many in the expat community looked on with mounting incomprehension and horror at the sense of political drift, and then at the desperate attempts by the tsarist government and its successor, the Provisional Government, to stem the revolutionary tide. The French diplomat Maurice Paléologue observed with astonishment the capitulation of the autocracy in February 1917: "The

Czar of all the Russias had been de-throned as easily as a recalcitrant school-boy is made to stay in after school."

Rappaport is a restrained narrator who allows her eyewitnesses to speak for themselves, and their frank accounts detail mounting atrocities and lynchings committed by both revolutionaries and government forces. By the autumn, after months of defeat on the battlefields of the eastern front and stagnation and drift at home, the authority of the Provisional Government had been shredded. Power was reduced to its most basic expression: the ability to marshal men and weapons on the streets. After the Bolsheviks seized power, Philip Jordan, valet and chauffeur to the American ambassador, wrote home that "these crazy people are killing each other just like we swat flies at home".

Events in autumn 1917 divided foreign observers in the city, as they divided the world in the decades that followed. Some looked on not in horror but in exhilaration. John Reed, the American socialist reporter and author of the seminal 1919 book *Ten Days that Shook the World*, was fired by revolutionary enthusiasm. He had come to Petrograd to bear witness "to the dawn of a new world". Rappaport's own sympathies clearly lie with protagonists who did not share Reed's idealism. By the winter of 1917-18, the Dutch ambassador Willem Oudendijk lamented that Russia was a "bayonetocracy".

This is narrative history at its very best, communicating the confusion, exhilaration, horror and despair of that momentous year that changed Russia forever. **II**

Daniel Beer is a senior lecturer in history at Royal Holloway, University of London, and author of *The House of the Dead: Siberian Exile Under the Tsars* (Penguin, 2016)

**Civilians are frisked in Petrograd (St Petersburg) during the revolution of 1917, the "momentous year that changed Russia forever"**







A Native North American in traditional garb. JCH King presents the recovery of North America's indigenous peoples as "a narrative worth telling", according to Karen Jones



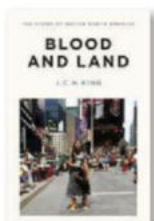
## Once upon a time in America

**KAREN JONES** recommends a vibrant new overview of indigenous North American culture and experience

### **Blood and Land: The Story of Native North America**

by JCH King

Allen Lane, 672 pages, £30



MAGNUM PHOTOS

In the introduction to this new book, JCH King describes his approach as "that of a museum curator". Given that he worked for decades in the British Museum and subsequently became a fellow of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, such a perspective comes with fine credentials. Here they are put to good use as King takes his reader on a sprawling and exhaustive (and, at times, exhausting) tour of the

cultural landscape of indigenous North America, concentrating mostly on the 20th century and looking largely at the US but also Canada and Greenland.

Readers will be familiar with Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970) or perhaps Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) – iconic texts of historical revisionism and modern Native American activism. *Blood and Land* sits comfortably in this landscape as a text that seeks to move beyond stereotype to deconstruct the indigenous experience in its diversity and complexity. King's book

***There is a sense that King is having fun with stories and characters***

offers a fresh approach in a number of ways. Whereas many treatments of aboriginal histories have focused on tropes of trauma, tragedy and disappearance, the emphasis here is on success.

As King sees it, the recovery of North America's indigenous peoples (from 375,000 in 1907 to some 2.5 million today) presents a narrative worth telling. In this book he attempts to explain how that recovery was orchestrated – in his words, how "Native America thrives as a phenomenon in both the imagination and intellect".

King eschews a chronological approach in favour of a thematic one. So we learn about political jurisdictions in the first chapter before a whistle-stop survey of sovereignty, cultural practices, languages and material artefacts. The focus then shifts to distinct experiences found in different regions. As King notes in his preface, 'locatedness' is essential to understanding the relationship between communities and the landscapes (both physical and imaginative) they inhabit.

*Blood and Land* is to be commended for its ambition. The subjects covered are fascinating, and in a matter of pages we shift from racial thinking in the 1800s to federal land policy, the nutritional intake of plains societies, epidemics, alcohol abuse, and education. An eminently readable work, there is a sense that King, as choreographer and curator, is having great fun presenting us with a procession of stories, characters and incidents.

The prose is creative and well informed, though less convincing in its presentation of historical context. The coverage of Canada and Greenland is a little perfunctory, and we hear little about Paleo-Indian culture, the destruction of the bison or social deprivation on 21st-century reservations. That said, the book is well worth a look for its snapshots of indigenous life across various geographies, and is easy to dip in and out of. King's comment that the story of Native North America is "a series of highly interconnected stories of separate processes" adeptly sums up the style of *Blood and Land*. ■

**Karen Jones** is a reader in history at the University of Kent



A 20th-century painting shows Karl Marx with colleagues on the editorial board of the German daily newspaper the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in the 1840s

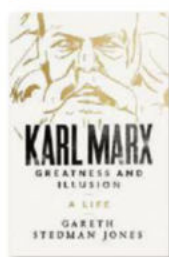
## Marx on a mission

**MICHAEL WOOD** hails a study of a man who was determined to understand how the world works – and then to change it

### Karl Marx - Greatness and Illusion: A Life

by Gareth Stedman Jones

Allen Lane, 800 pages, £35



On 17 March 1883 in London's Highgate cemetery, Friedrich Engels spoke the funeral oration at the grave of his old friend Karl Marx, in front of fewer than a dozen mourners: "Just as

Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history," and with it, Engels went on, "the special law of motion governing the capitalist mode of production."

It was the beginning of a myth of Marxism, of the idea that history could be understood 'scientifically', and that through it a utopian socialist reality could be achieved. Soon Marxism, in the form of its monstrous progeny Leninism, Stalinism and Maoism, would sweep the world in the hands of totalitar-

ian regimes that claimed it gave them the tools to shape the future.

Gareth Stedman Jones's engrossing book takes us back to who Marx *really* was. It situates him in the years following the French Revolution, engaged in the ferment of ideas that brought about the revolution of 1848 when Marx and Engels published the *Communist Manifesto*. These were young people's struggles, contesting received views of the world; asserting that religions, no less than the states and their laws, were constructions of the powerful; arguing that older conceptions of nature, religion and society were being transformed by science, capitalism and imperialism. We are still living with the consequences.

Here we see young Karl in his German hometown of Trier, inspired by English

**Marx comes over as a troubled soul who puts his loved ones through penury**



social movements, French idealism and German philosophy. One important strand in the story is Marx's lifelong attempt to understand the forms of human society that emerged from the ancient world, a subject transformed out of all recognition from the late 1850s by new developments in ethnography, anthropology and archaeology. As Marx saw at the end of his life, these would render obsolete his ideas on the development of early society, long before they were taken up by his followers in the 20th century.

Marx himself comes over as a driven, self-centred, troubled soul, who put himself and his loved ones through torture, penury and bad health; whose goal was nothing less than to understand a world being remade before his very eyes – and then to change it. Whether you are

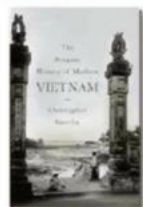
## Tales of temporary 'isms'

**SYLVIA ELLIS** is impressed by an inclusive and balanced history of the diverse, complex land we now call Vietnam

### The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam

by Christopher Goscha

Allen Lane, 672 pages, £30



This major general history of Vietnam is an ambitious work of synthesis, challenging existing histories of modern Vietnam, which assume 'modernity' came with French colonialism in the 19th

century or approach it from an American viewpoint. Instead this volume is inclusive – neither west-centric nor Asia-centric – and emphasises that "Vietnam has never been an ethnically homogeneous polity". Indeed, as Goscha points out, 'Vietnam' has no real meaning before 1945; it is more accurate to speak of multiple Vietnams, and this diversity and complexity is the main theme of his book.

The first three chapters focus on the centuries before the arrival of the French. They demonstrate vividly the religious,

geographical and political variety of the people of Indochina (spanning today's Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), and – aided by maps and photographs – outline the gradual expansion southwards. The remaining nine chapters cover the 19th and 20th centuries, and the conclusion takes the reader through more recent developments as the country moves toward parliamentary democracy.

The story of modern Vietnam is told through the familiar – emperors, Catholic missionaries, Ho Chi Minh, and Lyndon B Johnson's decision to Americanise the war in 1965 – but also through 1,000 years of Chinese rule, numerous Vietnamese reformers and warriors, and former prime minister Ngo Dinh Diem's attempt to assimilate the highland peoples.

GETTY IMAGES





a Marxist or not, there's no denying that his thought is a fundamental tool for the understanding of history: how the chains linking bourgeois society operate, how the means of production, surplus and capital are controlled... in other words, the way capitalism works.

Our own time has seen the expansion of global capitalism beyond Marx's wildest imaginings: the exponentially growing concentration of resources in the hands of the wealthy, and the ever widening gap between rich and poor. All these things developed out of what Marx saw in his world. But Stedman Jones's book left me with many thoughts about our own world too – and that's one of the many merits of this impressive study. **II**

**Michael Wood** is professor of public history at the University of Manchester

Though some might criticise Goscha for stressing that Vietnam was far from a united nation by the 1960s – suggesting this could be construed as justifying US intervention – that would be to misread the author's intention. Instead, this work offers a balanced and inclusive narrative demonstrating that tensions about the nature of that state, and its reformist tendencies, are evident throughout its existence. As Goscha concludes, in Vietnam “no one ‘ism’ is necessarily destined to last forever – not Confucianism, not Buddhism, not colonialism, not Catholicism, not communism, nor even republicanism”. **II**

**Sylvia Ellis** is professor of international history at Northumbria University Newcastle

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# Water world

**ROBERT BICKERS** on a novel approach to China's long history that uses water as a central thread

## The Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China

by Philip Ball

Bodley Head, 336 pages, £25



For decades, earth was the element dominating overseas ideas of China, particularly after Pearl Buck's wildly successful 1931 novel *The Good Earth* introduced to western readers the Chinese farmers' struggle for subsistence.

Even then, however, the Chinese were being recast in Marxist terms as 'peasants'. For the Chinese Communist party the 'problem of China' was landownership and subsistence. The Maoist solution was to put the peasant in command, and brutal politics of land and class dominated China from the 1950s to the 1970s. Then came Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening up' policies, set off by reforms to the agricultural sector that unleashed the productive power of the farmer. In the 21st century, though, China has become the workshop of the world, its factories poisoning the soil that so inspired Buck.

Science writer Philip Ball would have us think instead about another element. His oblique *longue-durée* history of

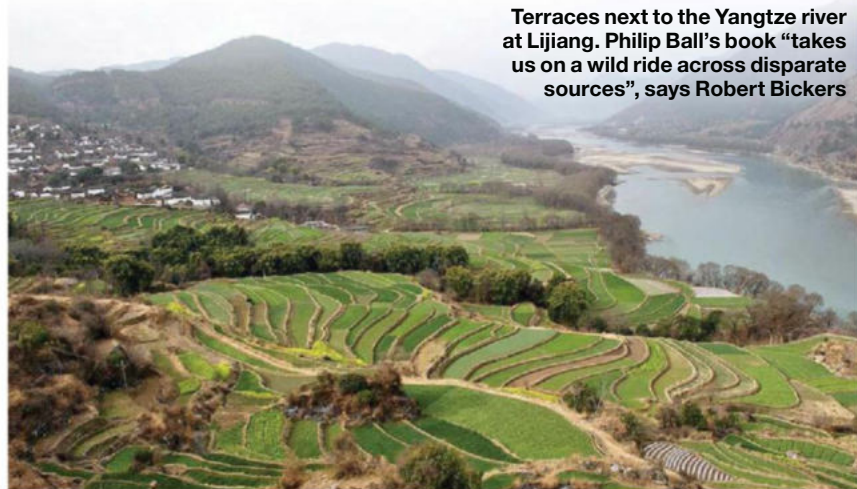
China has water as the key link, albeit sometimes also an existential threat. There is nothing 'secret' about it, of course, but it has the virtue of linking together seemingly disparate elements through the organisational conceit. It breezily ranges over 23 centuries or so, covering China's key waterways, its maritime history, the politics of flood control, irrigation and hydro-power, the place of water in Chinese philosophy and art, and contemporary issues of pollution and environmental management.

At its best, the book fleshes out familiar political narratives, though at times it's a wild ride across disparate sources – for example, a leap in just a couple of pages from Ming-dynasty travel writer Xu Xiake to a 1936 report from US journalist Edgar Snow.

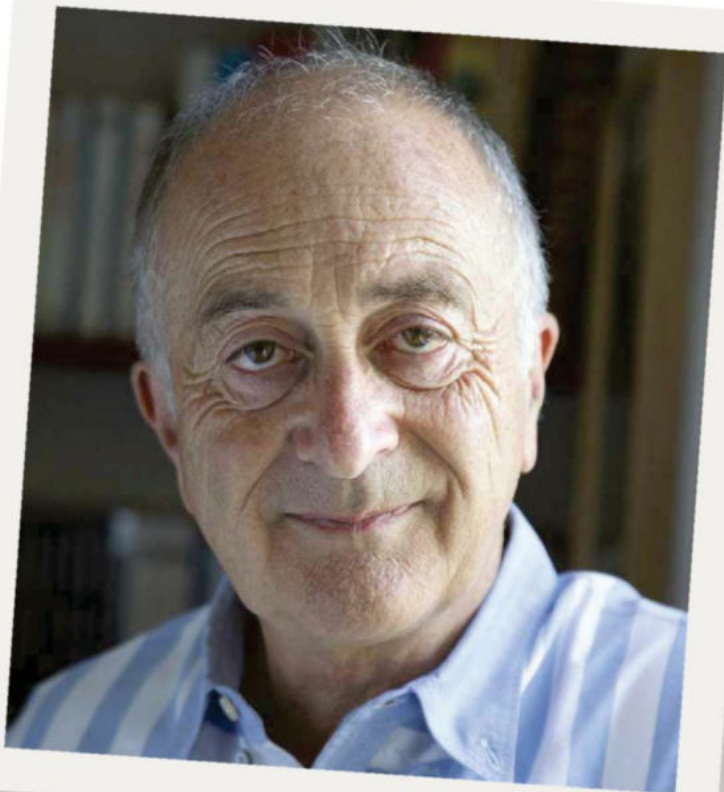
Ball's thesis is not entirely convincing, and for many his interpretations of China's modern history and contemporary politics might undermine confidence in his broader arguments. But it encourages us to think beyond the obvious pressing issues when considering the roots of China's current predicament. **II**

**Robert Bickers** is professor of history at the University of Bristol, and author of *The Scramble for China* (Penguin, 2012)

**Terraces next to the Yangtze river at Lijiang. Philip Ball's book "takes us on a wild ride across disparate sources", says Robert Bickers**







**“I don’t need  
a cunning  
plan to  
defeat  
dementia.”**

**Sir Tony Robinson  
Alzheimer’s Society Ambassador**

I don’t have the foggiest idea how to kick dementia into the history books. Thankfully I don’t need to, because I can help the people who do.

When dementia took my Mum and Dad I made a pledge that I didn’t want my grandchildren to fear going the same way, so I’m leaving a gift in my Will to Alzheimer’s Society. Without gifts in Wills one in four of Alzheimer’s Society projects would not be funded, affecting both crucial research and vital local services. I’m sure you also want to create a dementia-free future for your family, but without gifts in Wills it could remain a dream for generations to come.

Please join me by leaving a gift in your Will to Alzheimer’s Society. For your free Will Guide, please call the charity’s Legacy team on:

**0370 011 0290**

Alternatively for more information visit:

**[alzheimers.org.uk/tonyrobinson](https://alzheimers.org.uk/tonyrobinson)**

Alzheimer’s Society operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.  
Registered charity no. 296645.



Leading the fight  
against dementia  
**Alzheimer’s  
Society**



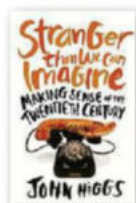
## PAPERBACKS



### Stranger than We Can Imagine: Making Sense of the 20th Century

by John Higgs

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 320 pages, £9.99



Just over 100 years ago, argues John Higgs, we were subjects of a handful of empires in which the rule of the elite was accepted as normal. Now here we are, all connected through decentralised, democratic networks that celebrate multiplicities. And the decline of the old social hierarchies has been accompanied by the collapse of certainty in science, art and thought. Yet we've become accustomed to a world in which there are no absolute, universal truths: use a satnav and you're relying on quantum mechanics, Newtonian physics and Einstein's theory of relativity – all of which contradict each other.

In this compelling and insightful account of the 20th century, Higgs presents what he sees as a transitional era "in all its chaotic glory, disjointed and discordant but wild and liberating", with a fascinating cast of mavericks and misfits. The fact that the occultist Aleister Crowley rates more mentions than Hitler may seem counterintuitive but it's intriguing nonetheless. From Freud to fractals, cubism to corporations, the topics covered are impressive in such a short book. Even more striking is how well he ties them all together. It's a bravura performance that's unreservedly recommended.

Alwyn Turner is associate lecturer at the University of Chichester and author of *Crisis? What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (Aurum, 2008)

### Hitler's Berlin: Abused City

by Thomas Friedrich

Yale University Press, 483 pages, £12.99



Hitler's – and, by extension, Nazism's – relationship with the German capital is still enveloped in myths and half-truths. Two of these myths are refuted here. The first is that Hitler disliked or even hated Berlin. As the late Thomas Friedrich reminds us, though the Nazi leader may have despised what Berlin had come to represent to him politically – leftwing cosmopolitanism and perceived 'Jewish influence' – he admired the city architecturally, describing it as "wonderful".

The second myth is that Nazism was, as a force, essentially alien to the German capital, imposed from without. Friedrich – whose book, first published in German 10 years

ago, focuses on the period prior to 1933 – shows that, though Nazi electoral returns in Berlin were lower than elsewhere, they were not absent from the capital entirely. Indeed, two of Nazism's primary 'martyrs' – paramilitary Horst Wessel and Hitler Youth Herbert Norkus – were killed in the capital.

In dispelling these myths and telling the wider story of the rise of Nazism in Berlin, Friedrich draws on an impressive body of research, and his well-translated book is as engaging as it is informative. It rather peters out after 1933; a final chapter on the Nazis in power feels desultory, ends suddenly, and makes only cursory references to Hitler's impossibly ambitious 'Germania' plans for the wholesale rebuilding of the German capital. Nonetheless, this book admirably fills a niche.

Roger Moorhouse is a historian and author of *Berlin at War* (Bodley Head, 2010)

### The Story of Egypt

By Joann Fletcher

Hodder & Stoughton, 503 pages, £10.99

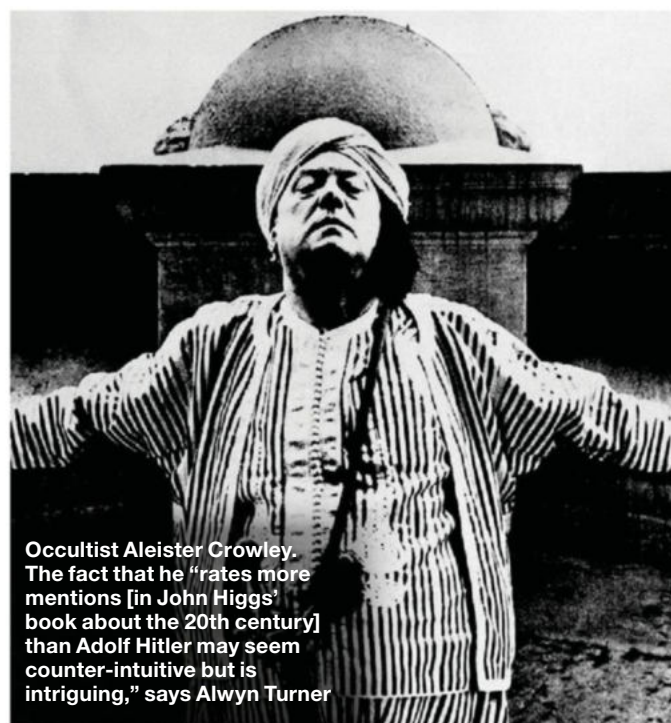


The ancient Egyptians measured time in endlessly repeating cycles, each new reign being both a new beginning and a repeat of all previous reigns. In contrast, we regard time as linear, with one reign flowing into the next. Egyptian history is, for us, over 3,000 years of dynastic culture from the unification of the land c3100 BC to the death of Cleopatra in 30 BC.

Joann Fletcher, like those ancient Egyptians, starts her story with the gods of creation. Writing with an engaging fluency, she whisks through the earliest phases of prehistory to reach the real start of her narrative in 5500 BC. Her story then slows to focus on the details – people, places, events – that, for her, characterise ancient Egypt. It's a vast amount of material, but she covers it well.

Her introduction contains an important caveat: "There are as many versions of Egypt's story as there are those to tell it... this is simply my version." It may seem that we know all there is to know about Egypt's long history but, in reality, this is an ongoing detective story. We have the bare bones, but we are still searching for clues to fill in the detail, and there are many places where the evidence is inconclusive and opinions divided. Fletcher is wise to point this out, as the book's format makes it difficult to spot these contentious areas in her enjoyable, informative guide to ancient Egypt. **II**

Joyce Tyldesley teaches Egyptology at the University of Manchester



Occultist Aleister Crowley. The fact that he "rates more mentions [in John Higgs' book about the 20th century] than Adolf Hitler may seem counter-intuitive but is intriguing," says Alwyn Turner





A miniature depicting the Varangian Guard, bodyguards to the Byzantine emperors, who included the extraordinary Harald Hardrada among their number

## FICTION

# From the Norse's mouth

**NICK RENNISON** is gripped by an imagined first-person tale of the turbulent life of Norwegian warrior Harald Hardrada

### Viking Fire

by Justin Hill

Little, Brown, 384 pages, £18.99



Harald Hardrada, the so-called 'last of the Vikings', died in battle near York in the tumultuous year of 1066, failing in his attempt to invade England just a few weeks before William

the Conqueror was successful in his. Little remembered in England today, he remains one of the great figures in the history of Norway, where he was king for 20 years and one of the men responsible for its unification. Justin Hill's energetic re-creation of Hardrada's career shows that his was an extraordinary life.

Half-brother to Olaf, an earlier king, the teenage Harald witnesses the death of his royal sibling in battle and, badly hurt, is forced to flee Norway. Recovering from his wounds, he sets off to seek his fortune first in Russia and then in the Byzantine empire. (Hill brilliantly describes the young warrior's awestruck

response to his first sight of Constantinople.) Joining the legendary Varangian Guard, bodyguards to the emperor, Harald campaigns in Sicily, travels to the Holy Land and is dragged into the turbulent politics of the imperial court.

When an arrogant young nobleman stages a coup, the Norseman is imprisoned but escapes to play a central role in the downfall of the pretender and the restoration of the rule of the two rightful sister-empresses, Zoe and Theodora. Briefly he becomes Theodora's lover but Harald yearns for the homeland he left 15 years earlier. Returning to Norway he seizes power, reigning as king for two decades before his restless energies lead to his fatal invasion of England.

Told largely in Hardrada's voice, *Viking Fire* paints a colourful picture of his brutal age. Unlike many novelists who have written about the Vikings, Hill is at least as interested in the exploration of character as he is in the depiction of violent action, and his book is also a gripping study of a charismatic and intelligent warrior-king. **B**

**Nick Rennison's** latest historical novel is *Carver's Truth* (Corvus 2016)

## THREE MORE 11TH-CENTURY WARRIORS IN FICTION

### Shieldwall

Justin Hill (2011)



In the first decades of the 11th century, England teeters on the brink of anarchy during the reign of the weak king, Æthelred 'the Unready'. When Æthelred dies, the Danes under Cnut threaten to take complete control of the country, but the dead king's son Edmund Ironside and the young thane Godwin lead native resistance to the invaders. Hill's earlier, equally impressive novel brings the distant world of the Anglo-Saxons to vivid and vigorous life.

### Hawk Quest

Robert Lyndon (2012)



In the 1070s, a mercenary named Vallon gathers together a motley crew of misfits and leads them first to Iceland, to capture a rare white falcon, and then through the heartland of R to a ren zvous with the Muslim sultan who desires the bird as ransom for a Norman knight he has captured. From a series of richly imagined episodes, Lyndon constructs a hugely enjoyable saga of adventure in exotic places.

### The Harrowing

James Aitcheson (2016)



Set in the aftermath of the Norman conquest during the 'Harrying of the North', when William's soldiers laid waste to the north of England, Aitcheson's spirited novel follows the fortunes of five very different individuals – from the warrior Beorn to the minstrel Oslac – who have become refugees in their own land. Joining forces, they struggle to escape both the Conqueror's pursuing soldiers and their own past histories as they seek out those rebellious Saxons who continue to resist the invader.





Watch Sophie Raworth trace her ancestors on BBC One this autumn

Jonathan Wright previews the pick of upcoming programmes

# TV & RADIO

## Family stories

### Who Do You Think You Are?

TV BBC One

scheduled for September

Returning for a 13th series, the genealogy show offers up a typically eclectic collection of stories as the likes of *Royle Family* star Ricky Tomlinson, Oscar winner Sir Ian McKellen and news presenter Sophie Raworth trace their family histories.

Among the highlights, we're promised *EastEnders* actor Danny Dyer discovering a family connection to royalty; pop star and former *X Factor* judge Cheryl tracing the story of her great-grandfather, who fought in the First World War; and *Britain's Got Talent* judge Amanda Holden learning about a Napoleonic-era cross-channel romance.



Britain's Lost Masterpieces visits some of the UK's finest stately homes

## Art rediscovered

### Britain's Lost Masterpieces

TV BBC Four

scheduled for September

We live in a nation where local museums, galleries and stately houses are homes to remarkable collections of artworks – and where sometimes the importance of these works has been rather overlooked. Enter historian and art dealer Dr Bendor Grosvenor and art historian Jacky Klein who, for a three-part series, go digging in vaults and storerooms across the country.

As well as tracing the histories of some of the nation's art collections, the duo's aim is to highlight hidden secrets about key paintings. We also get a glimpse of the art restoration process as the most important paintings are carefully cleaned up and re-hung.

## True grit

Writer Debbie Horsfield tells us how the team behind *Poldark* strive to make the drama as authentic as possible

### Poldark

TV BBC One

scheduled for September

With its windswept vistas and Cornish accents, it's tempting to think of *Poldark* as a bucolic historical romance. That's not how scriptwriter Debbie Horsfield sees it. Rather, she says, it's more akin to "a British *Gone With the Wind*", a drama set in "turbulent" times – specifically, the late 18th century, the era of the American and French revolutions and the early industrial revolution.

"You get the best of both worlds," she says, "because you get the lovely Jane Austen-style drawing room scenes, which are all about manners and looks exchanged between people, but you also get a real sense that it's rooted in the real world. It does look beautiful but it also looks really gritty."

It's a combination that's proved hugely popular with viewers, as has the brooding presence of Aidan Turner as Ross Poldark. Winston Graham, author of the *Poldark* novels, brought the mining entrepreneur and American revolutionary war combatant to life after meeting a Second World War RAF pilot on a train

and becoming interested in the idea of a veteran returning to a changed world.

In the quest for historical accuracy, all scripts are run past historian Hannah Greig, and this can result in changes. Take the moment that Ross re-meets his cousin Verity in season one. Horsfield thought the two would embrace. "Hannah flagged up that actually men and women who were not married to each other would never touch each other in that way," she says. "The most they would do is what we have Verity do, which is she would grasp Ross's hands and squeeze them tight."

Looking past the new series, which will find Ross again scrapping with the ruthless George Warleggan, work has already begun on season three, when events in France will cast a long shadow. "Hannah sent me cartoons of what was going on during the French Revolution, people thinking that the republicans roasted babies and drank the blood of aristocrats," says Horsfield. "The fear was that the French were coming and they would be doing the same in Cornwall." **ITV**

For more on *Poldark* look out for a **BBC History Magazine** special edition about the Georgians, on sale 12 October

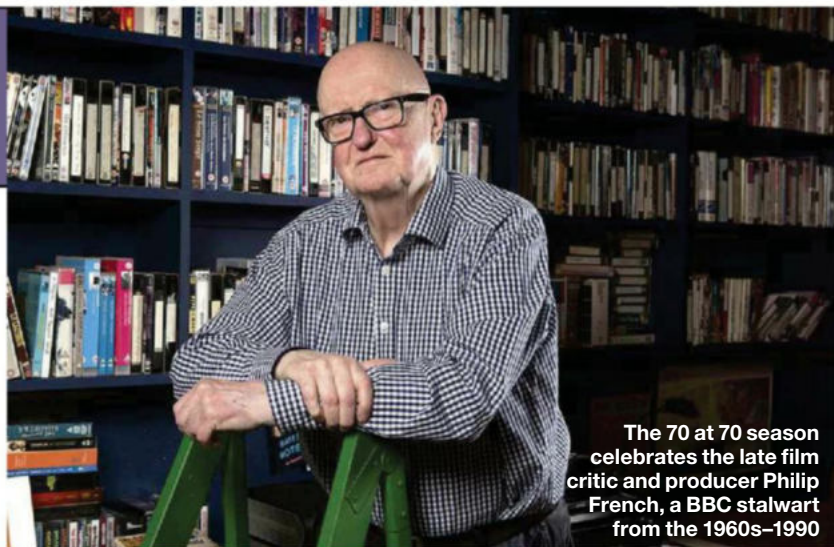
Aidan Turner will be gracing BBC One with his brooding presence again this autumn



**Winston Graham brought Poldark to life after meeting a Second World War RAF pilot on a train**

**HISTORY MAGAZINE CHOICE**





The 70 at 70 season celebrates the late film critic and producer Philip French, a BBC stalwart from the 1960s–1990

## Magic numbers

### 70 at 70 season Radio Radio 3

scheduled to run from Friday  
23 September–Friday 7 October

On 29 September 1946, the BBC's Third Programme was launched. The forerunner of BBC Radio 3, it quickly came to occupy a central role within the country's cultural and intellectual life, notably for its role in commissioning new musical and literary works. Seven decades on, the 70 at 70 season celebrates the anniversary.

Highlights include a satirical play, *The Present Experiment* by Robin Brooks, which charts the birth of the Third Programme; a tribute to the late and

much missed film critic and former BBC producer Philip French; and *The Visa Affair*, a new play by crime writer Jake Arnott, inspired by an unpublished Joe Orton short story. In addition, there will be the chance to see as well as hear what's going on as presenters and producers take up residency for a fortnight in a pop-up glass studio at London's Royal Festival Hall.

The series also explores the Third Programme's role in Britain's cultural history. Media historian Professor David Hendy has been trawling through the archives and, among other nuggets, we can expect tales both of how the Soviets jammed Third Programme broadcasts and how there was paranoia about Radio 3 staff being communists.

## Innocent abroad

### Empresses in the Palace

DVD (Simply Media, £29.99)

As *Versailles* and *House Of Cards* have proved, there's certainly an international audience for tales of political intrigue, which suggests this Chinese series may be arriving on DVD at an opportune time. Set in the reign of the Qing dynasty Yongzheng Emperor (1678–1735), it focuses on Zhen Huan (Sun Li), a 17-year-old naïf who enters the imperial harem.

The young concubine enters a world where many of those she encounters, notably the First Empress (Ada Choi), ruthlessly try to gain



Actress Sun Li as Zhen Huan, a young concubine in 18th-century China

and hold power. Can Zhen Huan rise to prominence, while managing to keep her integrity?

The drama was shown over 76 episodes in China, but this captioned UK release has been re-edited into a rather more manageable 541 minutes, divided over six feature-length episodes. The downside of this is that reviewers who followed the full version claim that some of the edits are confusing because swathes of plot have been cut.

That's as maybe, but the production values here are high and, at a time when China is reclaiming superpower status, the opportunity to see how a rapidly changing country sees its own history is fascinating in itself.



Jenna Coleman takes the role of Queen Victoria in ITV's new drama

As well as **Poldark** (see previous page), there are two other period dramas worth watching as summer gives way to autumn. **Victoria** (ITV, from Sunday 28 August), starring Jenna Coleman, follows the monarch's accession to the throne. On BBC Two, the excellent **Ripper Street** (from Monday 22 August, and on iPlayer) again finds Reid (Matthew Macfadyen) tramping the streets of Whitechapel.

**Tank Men** (BBC One South and iPlayer, Friday 9 September) marks 100 years since tanks went into battle on the western front. Rob Bell charts events from the perspective of two young soldiers.

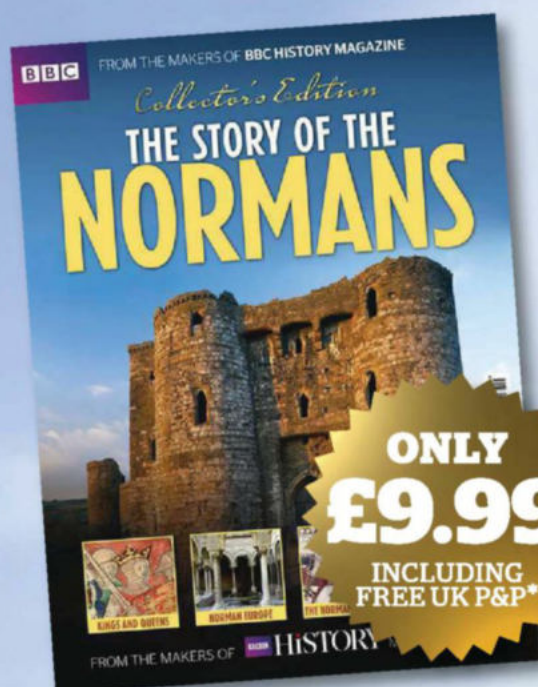
On Gold, **Richard E Grant on Ealing Comedies** (Sunday 18 September) finds the actor charting the story of a company that, via such classic comedies as *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, did much to shape how Britain saw itself. On UKTV, for **Unearthing WWI** (Tuesday 13 September), David O'Keefe and Wayne Abbott look at the 1917 battle of Vimy Ridge. On Radio 4 Extra, **Joe Queenan: My Years of Awe and Wonder** (Saturday 17 September) finds the satirist revisiting interviews with the likes of Germaine Greer and Armando Iannucci, all recorded for his radio histories of irony, cunning, disobedience and failure.

In **Ozzy and Jack's World Detour** (History, Sunday 18 September), the Black Sabbath singer and his son – both self-proclaimed history buffs, – explore such sites as Stonehenge, Bletchley Park and the world's oldest pub.



FROM THE MAKERS OF **BBC** **HiSTORY**  
MAGAZINE

# Collector's Edition THE STORY OF THE NORMANS

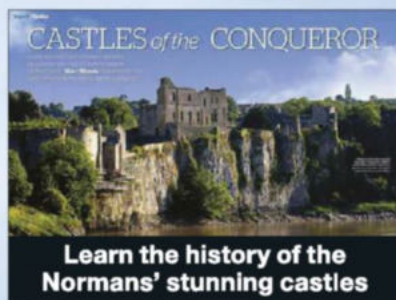


Marking the 950th anniversary of the 1066 battle of Hastings, this *BBC History Magazine* collector's edition traces the Normans' journey from Viking raiders to rulers of England

**Inside you will find:**

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- ◆ Dramatic accounts of the Norman conquest and its aftermath
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# OUT & ABOUT

## HISTORY EXPLORER

### The battle of Flodden

Katie Stevenson tells Spencer Mizen how the **Scottish Borders** were thrown into turmoil by a titanic Anglo-Scottish clash

It's 1514 and the kingdom of Scotland is in a state of utter disarray. An English army has just defeated a Scottish invasion force in a titanic battle, Scotland's king is dead, and bands of English marauders are roaming the borderlands preying on the weak and vulnerable.

The Scottish Borders have, it seems, never been at a lower ebb. But there's some fight left in the people yet. For out of the town of Hawick rides a small band of youths determined to teach the English raiders a lesson. They catch up with their foe at nearby Hornshole and put them to flight, before returning home with a captured English banner.

Cold-hard historical truth? Heavily romanticised legend? To the people of Hawick it hardly matters, for the story of the 'Callants' – as the youths of 1514 are more widely known – is as woven into the story of Hawick as the wool trade on which the town built its prosperity.

The Hawick Callants' exploits have been commemorated in art and memorialised at the spot where the Hornshole skirmish is said to have taken place. Yet, most visibly of all, they are celebrated in the heart of Hawick itself. There, dominating the town's high street, is a statue of one of the Callants on horseback, raising the captured banner aloft in triumph as he enters the town, fresh from the skirmish.

This statue – unveiled in 1914 on the 400th anniversary of the event it commemorates – is an imposing symbol of martial prowess. But, more than that, it is a representation of the Scottish Borders' defiance in the face of adversity. And what adversity. For a year earlier, just over the English border at a place called Flodden, the Scots had suffered one of their greatest military

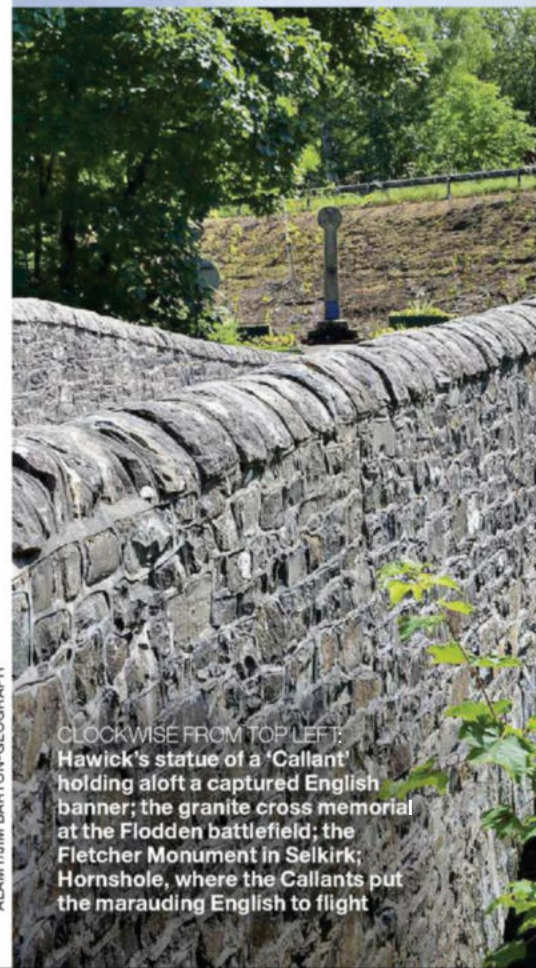
reversals, in the largest ever Anglo-Scottish battle. Not only would this defeat cost thousands of lives and rip the heart out of the nobility, it would help define the way that the people of Scotland thought about their country and its history for centuries.

#### Best of enemies

To the casual observer, it may appear that the English and Scottish were constantly at each other's throats from the time of Edward I's wars of conquest in the 13th century to the union of the crowns in 1603. Yet, as Katie Stevenson, senior lecturer in late medieval history at the University of St Andrews, explains, just a few short years before the battle of Flodden, relations between the two nations were actually relatively good. So much so that in 1503, Henry VII of England consented to his 13-year-old daughter Margaret marrying James IV, Scotland's dashing, accomplished (and 30-year-old) monarch.

"This was a union with benefits for both nations," says Katie. "Historians have often portrayed it as a real coup for James – he was, after all, marrying into this fantastic Tudor dynasty. But you've got to remember that, in 1503, the Tudor dynasty was in its infancy, and desperately trying to establish its legitimacy. The Stewarts, on the other hand, had ruled Scotland for 130 years and oversaw a relatively settled administration. Henry was all-too eager to buy into that stability."

And it wasn't just Scotland's stability that made the alliance an appealing proposition for the English. James IV, the man, was an attractive proposition too. "He was in every sense a renaissance prince," says Katie. "He was a great patron of the arts and sciences, conducting science experiments in his own courts and keeping track of the latest



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Hawick's statue of a 'Callant' holding aloft a captured English banner; the granite cross memorial at the Flodden battlefield; the Fletcher Monument in Selkirk; Hornshole, where the Callants put the marauding English to flight

ALAMY/JIM BARTON-GEOGRAPH









**A portrait of Scottish king James IV, who “was in every sense a renaissance prince – a great patron of the arts and science”**



**In 1503, James IV married Henry VII's daughter Margaret Tudor (above), a union with benefits for both England and Scotland**

developments in Europe. He was a far more outward-looking monarch than his predecessors, and that created a confident, attractive atmosphere at court.”

### **An English invasion**

But James's outward-looking nature was to set him on a collision course with his southern neighbour – for in 1509 the English throne passed to Henry VIII, a monarch with designs of his own in Europe.

“Henry was an ambitious, bellicose king who yearned to reclaim English territory in France,” says Katie. “That presented James with a serious problem, for Scotland had an agreement to come to France's aid in the event of an English invasion. So when, in June 1513, Henry did just that – allying himself with the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian and the papacy in a conflict with France – James was forced to act.”

That action – a diversionary tactic designed to draw English resources north while Henry and the bulk of his nobility were on campaign in France – was an invasion of England. And it met with early success. Within a matter of days, James had taken the border fortress of Norham and the castles of Etal and Ford. Now, with a sizeable chunk of north-east England under his control, he awaited Henry's response.

“I don't think Henry ever seriously considered returning to England to confront James himself,” says Katie. “In his view, the Scottish invasion was a mere sideshow to the more significant events going on in France. But James had to be dealt with, and so Henry sent the Earl of Surrey, an experienced commander from a successful military family, to face him.”

The two sides met at Flodden in Northumberland on 9 September 1513. We can't be sure how many men were involved in the clash – the Battlefields Trust estimates that James's army numbered between 35,000 and 40,000, while the Earl of Surrey brought 26,000 men. Other sources suggest that the two sides were more evenly matched. Either way, it was a huge clash – one in which the Scots suffered a crucial disadvantage.

“It had been raining heavily in the days before the battle, and the ground was extraordinarily muddy,” says Katie. “That proved catastrophic for the Scots, because the tight, claustrophobic, boggy conditions seriously compromised the effectiveness of the long pikes that they used in battle.”

At first, James's army appeared to be gaining the upper hand, an initial pike attack smashing into the English right flank and causing the line to buckle. But when a second pike attack floundered in the mud,

the English pounced. First their footsoldiers – with their shorter, more manoeuvrable bills – made ground. Then Surrey's archers moved in, raining arrows down on the Scottish ranks. By now the Scottish were firmly on the back foot but it wasn't until news broke that their king had been cut down – part of his body allegedly removed from the battlefield and identified by an English lord the next day – that the fight left the Scots. James remains the last monarch to die on the battlefield in Britain.

With James's death, the 1513 Scottish invasion of England was well and truly over. In the past, the defeated invaders might have limped back over the border to lick their wounds and fight another day. Flodden was different. Not only had the Scots' charismatic leader been cut down, they'd lost perhaps 10,000 of their men on the battlefield, including a huge chunk of the nobility. And it was this last fact that made Flodden such a black day in Scottish history.

“In most battles of the time, knights would be taken hostage and ransomed,” says Katie. “But that doesn't happen at Flodden. The fighting was incredibly tight, intense, hugely claustrophobic, and so you get this situation where the nobility are massacred too. With such a loss of life among the ruling

BRIDGEMAN



**“BECAUSE THE FIGHTING WAS SO TIGHT AND CLAUSTROPHOBIC, MUCH OF THE SCOTTISH NOBILITY WAS MASSACRED TOO”**



classes, the impact on Scottish society must have been shocking.”

It is hard to know exactly what life was like in Scotland in the immediate aftermath of Flodden because, for the next 50 years or so, the battle all but disappears from Scottish records. And it would be another three centuries before Flodden began to have a major impact on Scottish culture. Now, with the nation in a political union with the auld enemy, the battle began to enjoy a new – and deeply romanticised – afterlife.

### Chivalry and loss

“*Marmion*, Walter Scott’s 1808 poem about Flodden, was a watershed moment for the battle’s place in the Scottish national consciousness,” says Katie. “*Marmion* introduced Flodden to the world. And the idealised portrait that it painted of the events of 1513 instantly made them useable to the people of Scotland as watchwords for suffering, chivalry and loss.”

Subsequent events in Scottish history only served to reinforce Flodden’s relevance to the nation’s vision of itself. “Suffering and loss have been a continuous theme of the past 300 years,” says Katie. “You’ve got mass emigration as thousands of young men left for the New World to find work, you’ve got

### VISIT Hawick



The Scottish Borders  
● [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)

the resentment and dislocation of rapid industrialisation and, of course, the terrible death tolls suffered by Scottish regiments in the two world wars. Time and again, Flodden has provided the Scots with a way of talking about what happens when large numbers of men are no longer around.”

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Scottish Borders. “There’s little doubt that the bloodbath at Flodden had its greatest impact on Scotland’s border towns,” says Katie. “As James’s invasion dragged on, as more men were needed to garrison the captured castles, you can bet it was from this area that they’d have been pulled in. And it’s probable that the huge losses suffered at Flodden would have fallen especially heavily on border towns like Hawick and Selkirk.”

Accordingly, Hawick and Selkirk were at the vanguard of the post-Scott movement to memorialise Flodden. In Selkirk the most obvious manifestation of this is the Fletcher Monument, a bronze statue, erected in 1913, to commemorate the return to the town of the only survivor of 80 Selkirk men who fought at Flodden. The hero is depicted bearing an English flag that he has just cast to the ground amid the bereaved, weeping wives and children. Barely a year later, Hawick followed suit with the Callant statue.

It’s more than five centuries since the men of Hawick fought and died at Flodden. But a stroll down the high street to the Callant statue leaves you in no doubt that the battle continues to loom large in the imagination of the Scottish Borders today. **H**



Katie Stevenson is a senior lecturer in late medieval history at the University of St Andrews.  
Words: Spencer Mizen

## BATTLE OF FLODDEN: FIVE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE

### 1 The Flodden memorial

NORTHUMBERLAND

#### Where a Scottish king was cut down

The best place to start any tour of Flodden is the granite cross memorial. Erected in 1910 to commemorate the dead of both nations, it offers wonderful views across the battlefield. Fully illustrated boards help you to visualise the battle as you walk around the site.

[visitnorthumberland.com](http://visitnorthumberland.com)

### 2 Selkirk

THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

#### Where a sole survivor is honoured

Legend has it that, of all the men from Selkirk to fight at Flodden, just one survived. His name was Fletcher and the Fletcher Monument, a statue of this defiant warrior holding aloft a captured English banner that he brought back to Selkirk in the aftermath of the battle, takes pride of place in the town centre.

[visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)

### 4 Hornshole memorial

NEAR HAWICK, SCOTTISH BORDERS

#### Where Borders pride was restored

The famous Callants may have hailed from Hawick but it was at nearby Hornshole that they reputedly put English raiders to the sword and captured their banner. Today their exploits are marked by a memorial near Hornshole’s bridge.

[flodden1513.com](http://flodden1513.com)

### 4 The Flodden window

COLDSTREAM, THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

#### Where the battle is remembered

One of the most eye-catching memorials to the events of 1513 is a stained-glass window in Coldstream parish church, unveiled in 2009. You can also visit the nearby Tweed ford which James IV’s ill-fated army crossed on 22 August 1513 before invading England.

[flodden1513.com](http://flodden1513.com)

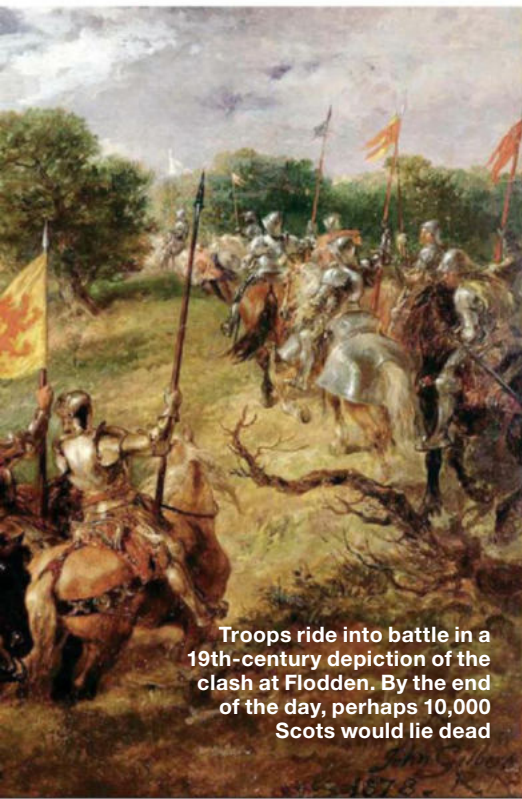
### 5 Sybil’s Well

FLODDEN

#### Where Marmion is said to have died

In the 19th century, Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford commissioned Sybil’s Well, a Gothic niche set into rockface on Flodden Hill. What makes the well so pertinent to Flodden – or at least the legend of Flodden – is that it’s here that Marmion, the hero of Walter Scott’s famous poem about the battle, is said to have died.

[pmsa.org.uk](http://pmsa.org.uk)



Troops ride into battle in a 19th-century depiction of the clash at Flodden. By the end of the day, perhaps 10,000 Scots would lie dead



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# FIVE THINGS TO DO IN OCTOBER

## A stitch in time

### EXHIBITION

#### Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery

Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
1 October–5 February 2017

☎ 020 7942 2000

● [vam.ac.uk/opus](http://vam.ac.uk/opus)



**T**his new exhibition, taking its title from the Latin for 'English work' – the fine needlework for which England was renowned between the 12th and 15th centuries – displays masterpieces of medieval embroidery from the V&A's world-class collections, plus works returning to England for the first time since they were created in the Middle Ages.

Embroidery was one of the glories of English art in the Middle Ages, and enjoyed an international reputation, sought after by kings, queens, popes and other high-status individuals. The exhibition features works associated with notable figures from the period, including Edward I and his queen Eleanor of Castile, Thomas Becket, Edward the Black Prince, Pope Nicholas IV and Edward III.

Highlights include complex and beautiful ceremonial cloaks made for use in church services. Among the rare surviving examples is the richly worked Jesse Cope (right, c1295–1315) depicting the Tree of Jesse – a vine springing from the body of Jesse (King David's father), sheltering prophets and ancestors of Christ. The exhibition – which features related works in other media from the period – will also explore the age in which the embroideries were made, shedding light on the tools and materials used by the makers of these sumptuous embroideries, many of whom were women in the City of London.



The 13th-century Jesse Cope is one of the embroidered highlights in the V&A's Opus Anglicanum exhibition

### EXHIBITION

#### Fishermen & Kings: The Photography of Olive Edis

Norwich Castle Museum  
8 October–22 January 2017

☎ 01603 495897

● [www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk)

One of the most important British photographers of the early 20th century, Olive Edis (1876–1955) was the UK's first accredited female war photographer. This landmark exhibition covers her 55-year-long career, with more than 190 rare photographs on show.



### EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

#### Animal Mummies Revealed

World Museum, Liverpool  
14 October–26 February 2017

☎ 0151 478 4393

● [liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

Egyptian animal mummies were prepared in their millions as offerings to the gods. This exhibition will explain the background to this practice in the context of life in ancient Egypt, and will feature specimens of mummified jackals, crocodiles, cats and birds.

**War photographer Olive Edis**

### REOPENING

#### Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)

University of Reading

From 19 October

☎ 0118 378 8660

● [reading.ac.uk/merl](http://reading.ac.uk/merl)

Dedicated to agriculture and rural life, MERL reopens after a £3m redevelopment, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It aims to present the collection in an innovative way, with nine new galleries challenging perceptions about rural England by revealing the historical and contemporary relevance of country life. There are also new education and visitor facilities.

### EVENT

#### BBC History Magazine's History Weekend

The Great Hall and Ashburton Hall, Winchester  
7–9 October

☎ 0871 620 4021 (booking line: calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras)

● [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

Our weekend festival is back for a fourth year in a new, historic setting at Winchester. The line up includes more than 25 big names in popular history, including Michael Wood, Suzannah Lipscomb, Dan Snow, Janina Ramirez and Antony Beevor. Our York weekend follows in November.



## MY FAVOURITE PLACE

# California, USA



by **Andrew Dickson**

Andrew takes a road trip through a state that is a patchwork of different pasts

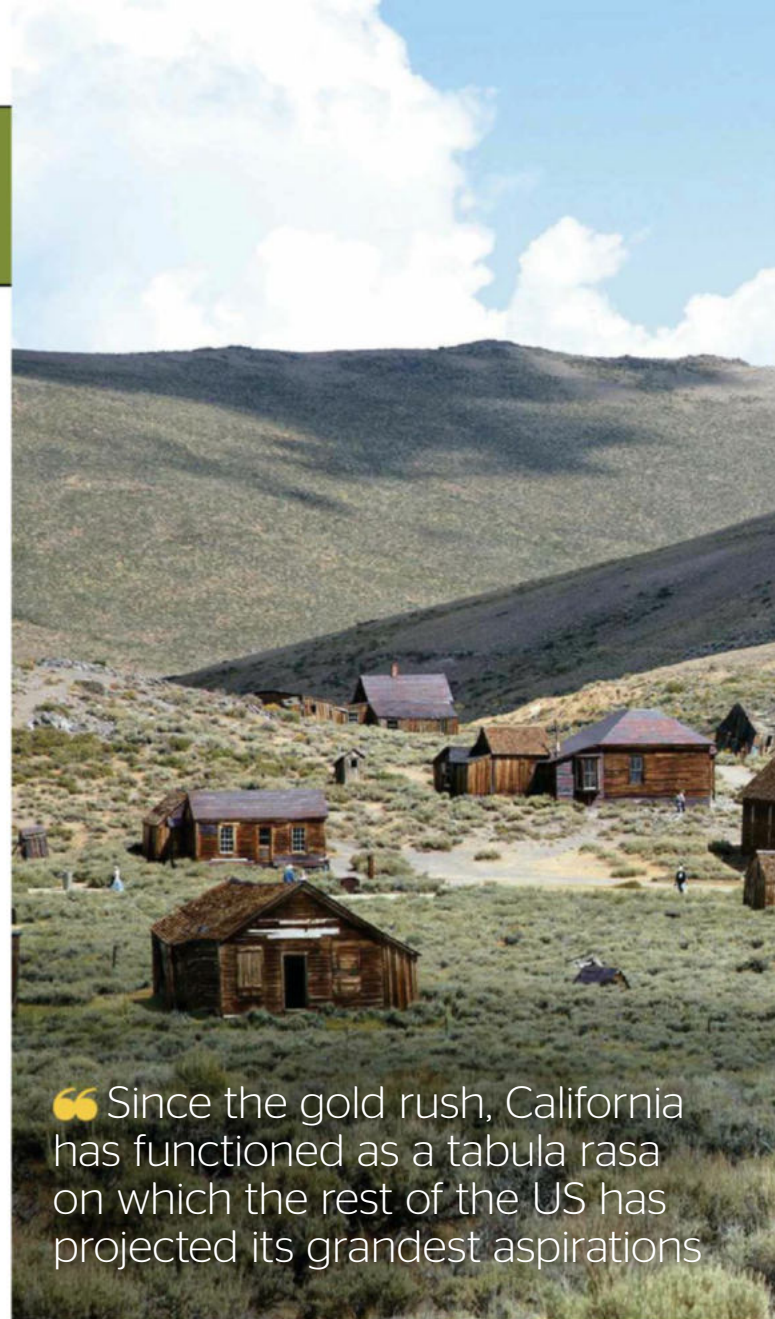
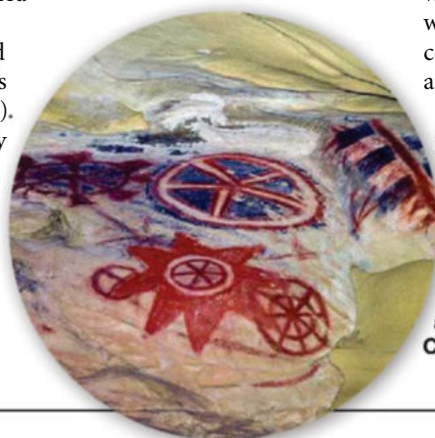
Some places you visit, history grabs you by the throat. I have strong memories of standing inside the Palace of Minos at Knossos on Crete as a nine-year-old child: hot, dark, forbidding, the Bronze Age menacingly close at hand. I've most often had that vertiginous sense of stepping into the past in Britain, where one is forever blundering into objects of serious vintage without intending to.

So perhaps it seems perverse to choose for this piece a place such as California, where the majority of history, as conventionally told, has occurred only since the mid-19th century. The territory was a straggling collection of coastal villages until 1848 and the discovery of gold in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains at Sutter's Mill (today the Marshall Gold Discovery Park, where visitors can try their hand at panning).

In 1848, the area was chiefly inhabited by descendants of 18th-century Spanish settlers and missionaries, surrounded by larger but dispersed inland Native American communities. Once the gold rush began,

aspiring 'argonauts' dashed to the west coast of the US from across the globe, and the place changed forever. In 1848, San Francisco was a sleepy, fogbound garrison town of 800 souls; by 1849, it was home to 25,000. No wonder historian HW Brands dubbed the place the "instant city". Overall, perhaps 100,000 arrived in California in those pell-mell first few years. The territory would be admitted to the US in 1850, after the end of the Mexican-American War.

Of course, California's timeline goes back much further – more than 1,000 years, if you know where to scout it out. The aboriginal Chumash people left brightly painted rock art in caves that are 25 minutes from the yachting clubs of downtown Santa Barbara, in the Chumash



“Since the gold rush, California has functioned as a tabula rasa on which the rest of the US has projected its grandest aspirations

Painted Cave State Historic Park. Near Death Valley in eastern California you can find traces of petroglyphs (rock carvings); tours are organised by Maturango Museum, Ridgecrest. Yet painfully little survives of the Native American populations who lived here before being wiped out by 16th and 17th-century Spanish colonisation and smallpox.

Since the gold rush, in particular, California has functioned as a tabula rasa on which the rest of the US has

projected its grandest aspirations – the golden gateway to the future, the place where you can abandon the past and chase the rainbow. Courtesy of a succession of terrible earthquakes and fires, even San Francisco retains an improvised, ramshackle feel.

All this makes it a wonderful environment for anyone interested in history to wander. More than any other place I've been, California's hectic urge to remake and reinvent itself has created a brightly coloured patchwork of many different cultures and pasts. Contrasts are everywhere: Native American history, Chinese history, Spanish history, Scottish history, Japanese history, German

**This painted rock art, not far from Santa Barbara, is a legacy of California's Chumash people**

SARAH LEE/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/PAUL HEWITT





Founded in 1859 after gold was discovered there, Bodie was abandoned in the early 20th century. Today it is one of several ghost towns to explore in California

history – there are whole worlds here in just one US state.

In the Sierra Nevada mountains north of Sacramento I spent a week in search of Shakespeare's influence in the Wild West for a book I was writing, and found mainly desolate mining ghost towns. They include North Bloomfield (formerly Humbug), in the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park in the Sierra Nevada hills, and the eerily atmospheric Bodie, east of Yosemite.

In the south of the state you can visit La Purisima near Lompoc, an 18th-century Franciscan mission in beautiful grounds, reconstructed during the depression of the 1930s. In amusing opposition, in Ojai it's Spanish Revival architecture and hippie hangouts all the way – a legacy of the town's history as a 1920s spiritual centre.

Head south and go to Hearst Castle, William Randolph Hearst's overblown pleasure dome, with choir stalls plundered from Italian Renaissance churches and bedrooms done in Venetian-doge kitsch. Yet even Hearst Castle pales in comparison with J Paul Getty's replica Roman villa outside

Los Angeles, filled with priceless ancient statuary. Located on the brow of a hill overlooking the Pacific Coast Highway, the place is surrounded by deep forest that, were you brave enough to penetrate it, would feel like something out of the Jurassic era. **II**

Andrew Dickson is a writer and journalist. His latest book is *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe* (Vintage, 2016)

Read more of Andrew's experiences in California at [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/california](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/california)

**Next month:** Kathryn Ferry visits Belgium's Ostend coast

## ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

### BEST TIME TO GO

Any time. Summer's a popular season to visit, but March to early May is one of California's most beautiful times of year.

### GETTING THERE

Flights are available from many parts of the UK, then rent a car to plan your own road trip.

### WHAT TO PACK

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, based on a series of road trips he made in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many passing through the state.

### WHAT TO BRING BACK

The classic WPA travel guide *California in the 1930s*. Compiled at the behest of Roosevelt's New Deal, by a motley crew of unemployed artists, novelists, historians and photographers, this has been republished by the University of California.

### READERS' VIEWS

I'd highly recommend Old Town in San Diego. It was the first place in California where Europeans settled @dtsturner

The drive to Monterey is worth it for the industrial and literary history – as well as the aquarium! Jill Anthony-Ackery

Joshua Tree National Monument is desolate and beautiful and worth seeing Aimee Rogers



### Been there...

Have you been to **California**? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

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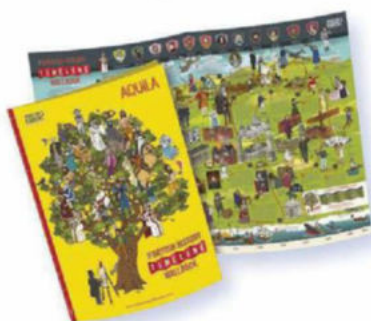
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BH 17



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## QUIZ

BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

Try your hand at this month's history quiz

ONLINE QUIZZES  
historyextra.com  
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**1.** Which South African town was named after the wife of a rifleman in Wellington's army?

**2.** What links Moseley Old Hall, Bentley Hall and Heale House?

**3.** Which English monarch was crowned by the bishop of Carlisle?

**4.** In May 1865 nearly 200 Welsh settlers sailed from Liverpool aboard the tea-clipper *Mimosa*. Where were they going?

**5.** Which are the odd ones out? Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, Dominicans?

**6.** Who sculpted this London statue commemorating the polar explorer Robert Falcon Scott?



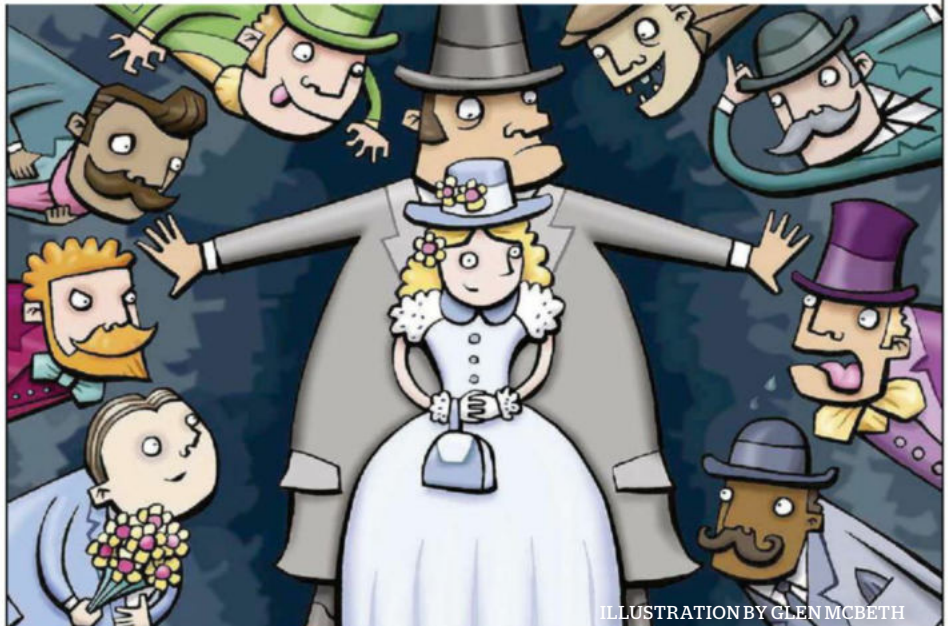
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### QUIZ ANSWERS

**1.** Ladysmith, after Juana, wife of Waterloo veteran Sir Harry Smith, the governor of South Africa's Cape Colony **2.** They were all used as hiding places by Charles II during his escape after the battle of Worcester **3.** Elizabeth I **4.** Patagonia **5.** Dominicans. They were friars while the others were monks **6.** His widow, Kathleen Scott

### GOT A QUESTION?

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## Q Chaperones seemed to be very important in Victorian times – so how did courting couples manage to spend any time alone together?

Sarah McClennan by email

A Chaperonage originated in the custom that outside the home daughters were accompanied by a relative or servant. By Victorian times this applied to 'respectable' families (upper/middle class) where girls were escorted in public – visiting, travelling, church or social events. The aim was protection against 'insults' – whistles, remarks, jostling, groping – especially in city streets, which men regarded as their territory.

They were required whenever one might meet strangers, such as a concert (respectable women did not go to the theatre) or a large party with dancing. This was part of the parallel ritual of 'coming out' to mark a girl's entry into the marriage market. The aim was protection against men whose flirtations could damage reputations, or worse.

Even though parents also encouraged young people to meet, in these circumstances it was difficult to get to know each other, and impossible to express feelings directly. A girl had to wait for the young man to ask her father's permission. If granted, courtship followed,

when the rules were relaxed, though not abandoned. As professional men worked six days a week, courting couples usually met only on Sundays, allowed to walk home from church together, or make a polite excursion to the park or the zoo. A sibling might act as nominal chaperone, and the man was on his honour to 'protect' his fiancée from all gossip.

So it's a mistake to think of courting couples seeking to avoid chaperones in favour of kisses and cuddles. No pre-marital sex was permitted, but it could be a most delicious and erotic period, with hand-squeezing and intimate conversations about the future.

Many relationships faltered after marriage for lack of mutual knowledge. But conjugal duties – husband to pay the bills, wife to keep house – were as strong as personal feeling. There is no doubt 'marriage mistakes' were made, at a time when divorce was unthinkable. Hence the importance, in life and in fiction, of making the 'right match'.

Jan Marsh, Victorianist and biographer



## SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it's a blancmange packed with fish and topped with almonds

### Medieval blancmange

The name might evoke a sweet milky dessert, thickened with gelatin and served cold. But go back to the Middle Ages, and your blancmange (literally: *white eating*) would contain chicken or fish, rice and almonds.

The 14th-century 'blank maunger' mentioned in *The Forme of Cury* used capon meat, but a Lenten version using fish was given in other early books. The fish would have been pike, tench, lamprey and even lobster. I used pollock fillets and fish stock cubes for convenience.

#### INGREDIENTS

400g fish fillet  
750ml fish stock  
30g blanched almonds  
1 tsp rosewater  
150g arborio rice  
400ml milk  
1 tsp butter  
A pinch of sugar  
A pinch of salt

#### Decoration:

1 tsp vegetable oil  
A handful of blanched almonds

#### METHOD

In a large saucepan, poach the fish in the stock until cooked through. Remove the fish and set aside. Grind the almonds with the rosewater in a pestle and mortar, add to the stock and bring back to the boil.

Add the rice and milk to the stock and boil until the rice is soft. Turn down the heat and stir often to prevent burning. Add the fish to the cooked rice, then purée the mixture in a food processor. Stir in the butter, salt and sugar. Scoop into a shallow dish.

For the decoration, heat the oil in a small frying pan, add the almonds and fry until brown. Place on top of the blancmange.

Serve as a dip with flatbread or crackers.

#### VERDICT

"Inoffensive but you wouldn't eat a whole bowl"

**Difficulty:** 2/10

**Time:** ¾ hour

Adapted from a recipe in *Pride and Pudding* by Regula Ysewijn (Murdoch Books)



Fish blancmange was popular during Lent



Injured British servicemen, formerly prisoners of war, thank the nurses who cared for them as they arrive home in Lincolnshire in 1918

### Q I was driving through Chelwood in Somerset and saw a sign saying it was 'A Thankful Village'. What does this phrase mean?

Janet Tregurtha, by email

A "Chelwood," wrote Arthur Mee in the Somerset edition of *The King's England*, "is one of the seven Thankful Villages in Somerset where all the men came back from the Great War; four went out and four came home. The other six villages sharing its good fortune are Aisholt, Rodney Stoke, Stocklinch, Stanton Prior, Tellisford and Woolley."

In the Yorkshire East Riding volume Mee says: "Thirty men went from Catwick to the Great War and 30 came back, though one left an arm behind."

Mee (1875–1943) used to be best-known for *The Children's Encyclopaedia* but *The King's England* must come a close second. This was a 42-volume guide to the counties of England, with information on every city, town and village. Mee did not visit every single place in person, but edited the contributions of his researchers.

The first editions came out in the mid-1930s, and the books have been popular ever since, first as travel guides and nowadays also as historical documents in themselves. Mee's romantically patriotic prose is also rather appealing.

Mee probably coined the term Thankful Village, and if he didn't, he certainly popularised it. He used it in the first volume in 1936, as well as publishing an article on Thankful Villages in *The Children's Newspaper*, (a publication he founded), in the same year.

At the time Mee identified 23 Thankful Villages in England. Of Woolley (one of those in Somerset) he wrote in *The Children's Newspaper*: "This hamlet of 13 houses sent 13 men to the war and every one came back ... We could find no shop in Woolley, no inn, no school, no letter-box, but we found a plain brass tablet of thankfulness for the safe return of their 13 men."

Mee's list later extended to 32 villages in England and Wales while subsequent research suggests that there may actually be more than 50. We do not know of any list for Scotland or Ireland. The relatively small number of thankful villages, of course, reflects the high casualty rates of the First World War. There would be no thankful towns.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist

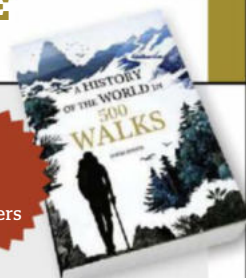


# PRIZE CROSSWORD

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this famous Cossack  
leader? (see 21 down)



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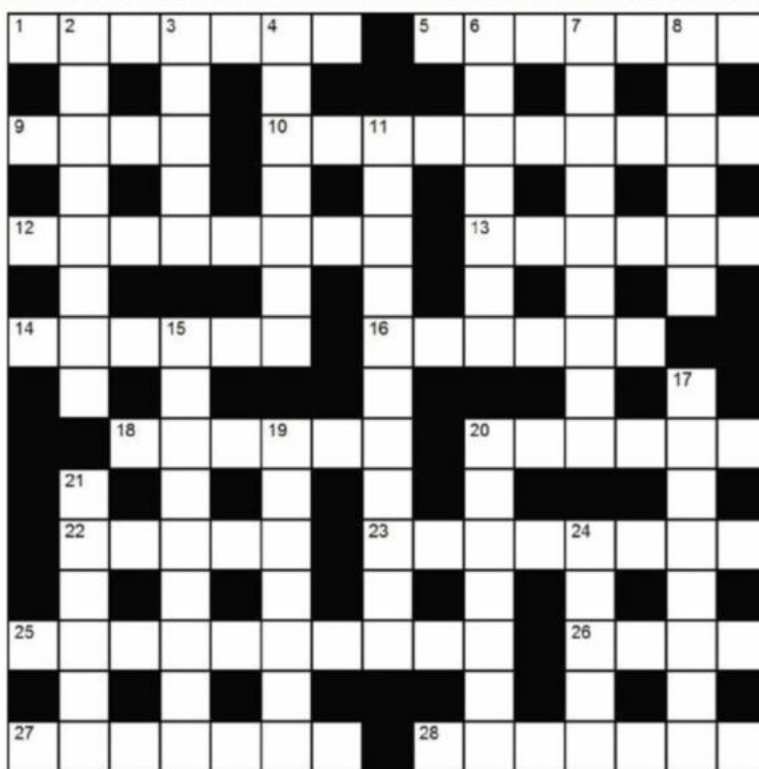
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## Across

- 1** Berlin suburb, where, in summer 1945, a conference of Britain, USA and USSR took place (7)  
**5** Tailored tunic, popular menswear of the 16th and 17th centuries (7)  
**9** James IV captured the castle near this Northumberland village in 1513, just before his defeat at Flodden (4)  
**10** Device for use in mines, separate versions of which were invented by George Stephenson and Humphry Davy in 1815 (6,4)  
**12** Medieval fortress of Paris, symbolic of royal authority, stormed in 1789 (8)  
**13** The Pacific island atoll once used as a nuclear test site by the USA (6)  
**14** The \_\_\_\_ Doctrine was the name given to the US policy of aiding Greece and Turkey against the threat of a communist takeover, after the Second World War (6)  
**16** Prince-bishops, based here in William I's day, were entrusted with the defence of northern England (6)  
**18** King of Mercia, briefly displaced by Egbert in 829 (6)  
**20** Pedro I became the first emperor of this country shortly after declaring its independence from Portugal in September 1822 (6)  
**22** A powerful kingdom of modern-day northern Ethiopia during the early Christian era (5)  
**23** Japanese clan who formed the shogunate of that name, which thrived during the 14th–16th centuries (8)  
**25** Old name of one of the four founding republics of the USSR (December 1922) (10)  
**26** Hungarian László, who in the 1930s invented the writing instrument that is often known by his name (4)  
**27** A battle of 14 June 1800, between Austrian and French troops, after which Napoleon named his horse (7)  
**28** The Little \_\_\_\_ was a defence arrangement between Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia in the 1920s/1930s (7)

## Down

- 2** A form of ostracism that removed a person's legal rights and put them at



- risk of being killed on sight (8)  
**3** Croatian city, once the location of Roman emperor Diocletian's palace (5)  
**4** Danish archbishop, close adviser to Valdemar I, who built the fortification that became Copenhagen (7)  
**6** The month of Tsar Nicholas II's manifesto, after which a political party calling for its fulfilment was named (7)  
**7** (One spelling of) location of a battle, part of the Siege of Sevastopol, on 25 October 1854 (9)  
**8** King of England, called 'Ironside' after his valiant resistance of Cnut's invasion (6)  
**11** An area of public buildings in Rome, originally a military training ground, named after a god (5,2,4)  
**15** A battle here in 1648 saw the defeat of Kentish royalists by the forces of Sir Thomas Fairfax (9)  
**17** Stepped tower, a characteristic religious construction of ancient Mesopotamia (8)  
**19** In 1839 this region was split into two adjoining provinces (keeping the same name) in Holland and Belgium (7)  
**20** Since ousting the Persians in 1783, the Al Khalifa family has ruled this Gulf state (7)

- 21** Ivan, the Cossack leader who sided with the Swedes against Russia in the Great Northern War (1700–21) (6)  
**24** 19th-century clergyman who, with Pusey and Newman, formed the Oxford Movement, seeking a renewal of some Catholic traditions (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

## SOLUTION TO OUR AUGUST CROSSWORD

**Across:** 1 Hamarskjöld 9 Bhutan 10 Standard 11 Ruhr 12 Hermitage 13 Beehive 15 Chile 18 Sikh 19 St Cyril 22 Saxon Shore 24 Penn 25 Seminole 26 Tithes 27 Tenochtitlan  
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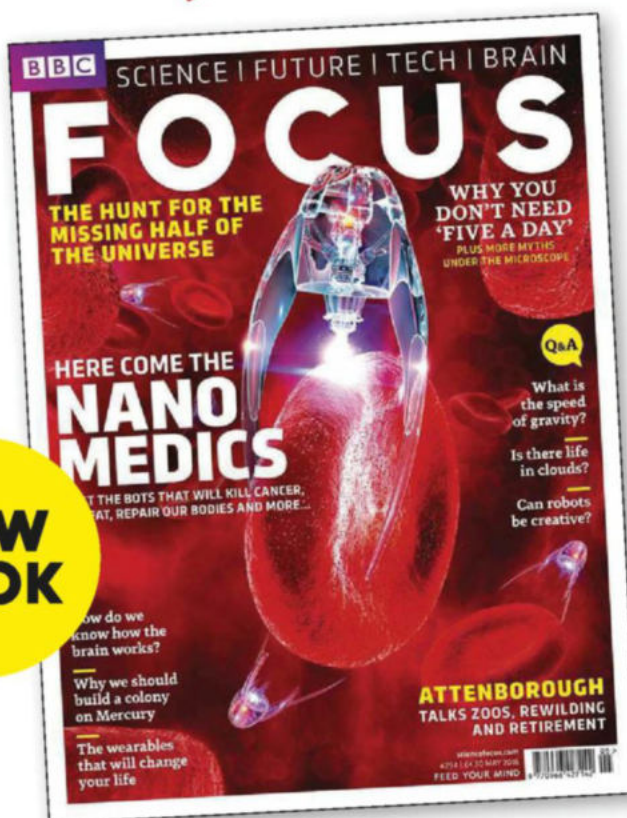
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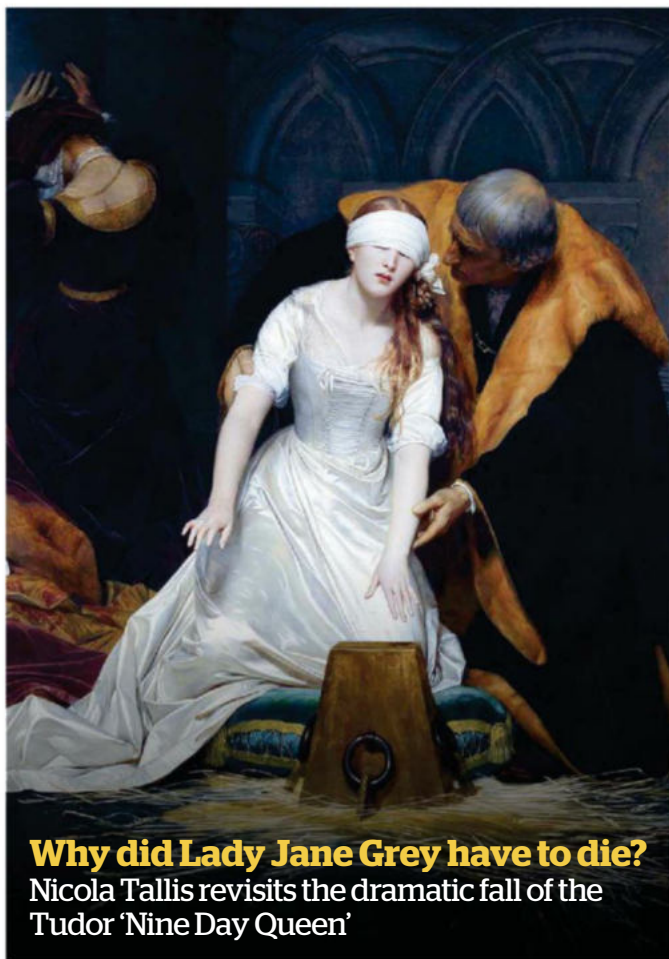
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# NEXT MONTH

NOVEMBER ISSUE ON SALE 6 OCTOBER 2016



**Why did Lady Jane Grey have to die?**  
Nicola Tallis revisits the dramatic fall of the Tudor 'Nine Day Queen'



## Churchill and the bomb

Kevin Ruane reveals why the British war leader fought to prevent a nuclear conflict

## Robber barons

Adam IP Smith on the notorious 19th-century American industrialists

## The Norman conquest

Marc Morris and Alex Burghart explore the events and consider the legacy of 1066







"Sam Cooke's song 'A Change is Gonna Come' became an anthem, but he died too young to see just how big an impact he would make on the music scene and the civil rights movement"

*Beverley Knight chooses*

# Sam Cooke

(1931-64)



Sam Cooke in a recording studio, around 1960. "He was a consummate performer but also a savvy businessman," says Beverley Knight

**S**amuel Cook, who performed professionally as Sam Cooke, was an American singer-songwriter and entrepreneur. Dubbed the 'King of Soul', and blessed with a distinctive vocal style, he notched up a string of hits with songs including 'Wonderful World' and 'Twistin' the Night Away'. He also founded a record label and publishing company, and was an influential figure in America's civil rights movement. He was just 33 when he was shot and killed by a Los Angeles motel manageress, who claimed that she acted in self-defence.

### When did you first hear about Cooke?

My parents would play his music in our house every Sunday, without fail – and I might have been only a few years old but I instantly fell in love with him and his music. I can still picture his old 33rpm discs going round on the turntable in our living room, and me being mesmerised. To me, he was just the man who would sing to me every Sunday.

### What kind of person was he?

He was a charmer, and I know that Aretha Franklin had a real crush on him. He had a lot of other female admirers, too – but, let's face it, he was a seriously good-looking man, with a real killer smile! He also had that heavenly voice, was a wonderful songwriter and arranger, and was a consummate performer. But what some people might not know is that he was also a pretty savvy businessman: he had his own publishing company, and set up his own recording label. He was absolutely nobody's fool.

### Why do you consider him a hero?

Firstly, because he was the father of soul – and if we hadn't had Sam Cooke, we wouldn't have had Bobby Womack, Marvin Gaye or Otis Redding. But also because he had that voice and idiosyncratic way of singing, and wrote his own songs. He was the first singer I ever heard as a child, though it was really only when I got older that I fully appreciated the impact he'd had on my own music and style of singing. He also wasn't afraid to take on the music industry and, last but not least, he was a leading light in the civil rights movement. So, for all those reasons, he's incredibly special to me.

### What was Cooke's finest hour?

In one sense, his song 'A Change is Gonna Come', which became a civil rights anthem. In another sense, though, I don't think he got to see his finest hour – he died too young to see just how big an impact he would make on the music scene and the civil rights movement; nor did he see the revolution in attitudes that was about to transform American society. In his day, a black man just couldn't eat in the same restaurant as a white man in large parts of the US.

### Is there anything you don't particularly admire about him?

I wish he hadn't been quite the ladies' man he was – as much as that was a massive turn-on, in some respects. Had he not been like that, he might still be alive today – he died after an incident following an altercation in a motel with a girl who he alleged had robbed him.

### What do you think he might have achieved if he had lived longer?

I think he would have become what Berry Gordy [founder of the Motown record label] became, and gone on to great success with a record label, signing up lots of artistes.

### Can you see any parallels between Cooke's life and your own?

Like him, I started off singing in the church. And like him, I also made the move from singing gospel to soul. So yes, I do see parallels...

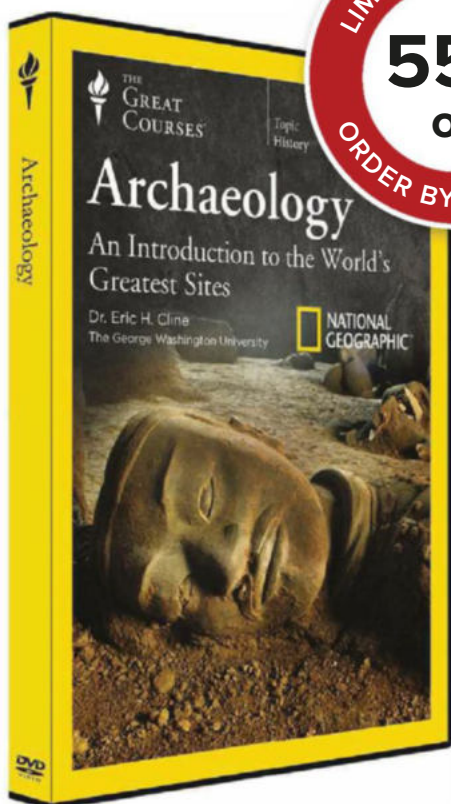
### If you could meet Sam Cooke, what would you ask him?

I'd probably be very tongue-tied. But if I could get the words out, I'd ask him what drove him to write the way he did, painting those little vignettes in his songs. I've always tried to do the same thing, but if I ever wrote a song as good as 'A Change is Gonna Come', I'd be a very happy woman! **■**

*Beverley Knight was talking to York Membership*

Beverley Knight's album *Soulsville* is out now on East West Records. She is currently starring in *The Bodyguard* at the Dominion Theatre, London ([beverleyknight.com](http://beverleyknight.com))





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# STUDY HISTORY

Expert advice, practical tips and inspiration for students hoping to plan a future based on the past

**“** You're passionate about history. Perhaps you're planning to study it at school or university, or are part way through a degree and thinking about postgraduate study or job options. If so, this guide is for you.

Over these 16 pages you'll read a series of articles designed to help you plot your course through the world of history. We've got information and advice on choosing history at A-level or studying it at degree level. We've also spoken to professionals in various roles to ask them how they got there and what it's really like to work in their field.

We hope you'll find this a useful guide to help you plan a fulfilling and fascinating career in history.

**Sue Wingrove**  
Acting deputy editor

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### **3 History in schools**

Our expert gives an update on the study of history at A-level

### **5 Choosing the right history degree for you**

How to make sure you get on a course you'll really enjoy, and that best suits your career needs

### **8 So you want to work in history?**

Eight people tell us about their jobs, from an advisor on the BBC's *Poldark* to a heritage manager





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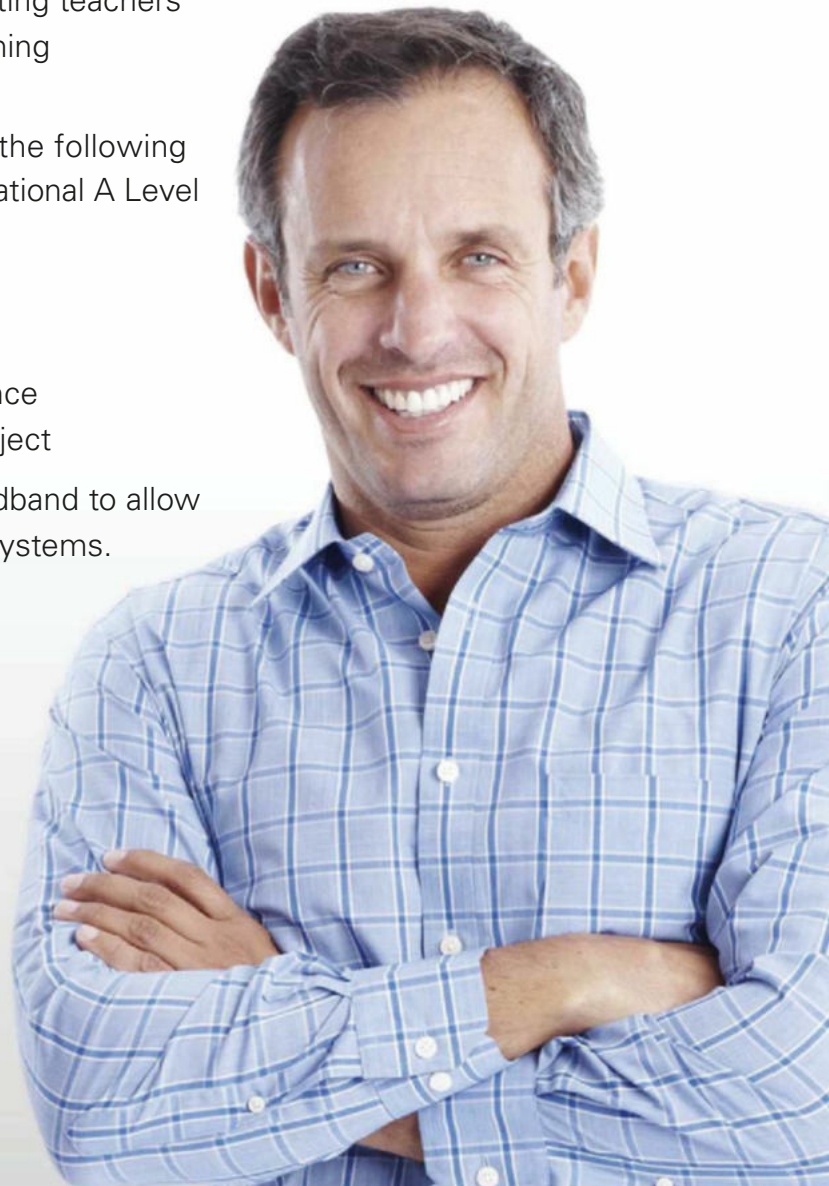
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# History in the classroom



History is a popular subject at A-level, and a new, broader curriculum means there's now more to it than just Tudors and Nazis, says **Richard Harris**

In the past couple of years there have been major curriculum changes in schools at Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland), GCSE and A-level. Keeping abreast of these can be daunting. Schools are currently in the midst of all these changes, so it is difficult to predict what the future will be.

Recently, history has been a popular subject at A-level. Since A-levels were given an overhaul in 2000, history has been taken by between 5 and 7 per cent of sixth-form students – slightly higher in the independent and grammar school sectors. It is often regarded as a 'facilitating' subject by leading universities, which see it as a good all-round qualification and a strong indicator of academic potential, because it develops analytical, critical and reflective thinkers. It also provides students with the contextual awareness to make sense of their world.

New A-level specifications set by the government have been taught since September 2015. This has seen a number of significant changes. Perhaps the most notable applies to the distinction between AS and A-level. Previously, exam papers at AS could result in an exit award at AS (if a student chose not to continue with their studies), or would contribute to the final A-level grade (if they did continue). Now the AS is a standalone qualification and exams taken in Year 12 can no longer count towards a final A-level grade. While most schools in 2016 entered students for the AS papers, feedback suggests many will abandon this in future and will only allow students to take all of the exams at the end of Year 13.

The other changes relate to content. At least 20 per cent of the course must include British history, but students must also learn about more than one country. A timespan has been introduced so courses should cover a range of at least 200 years. Within this, some aspects of history need to be taught in depth and others in breadth. This move is in response to criticisms that students could



Pupils handle a wartime gas mask during a history lesson at a secondary school

potentially study very narrow sections of history. The range of possible topics has also expanded. There are more opportunities to study medieval history (eg Vikings, Saxons, Normans and Angevins) and aspects of early modern Europe (eg the Dutch Revolt, the European witch craze, Louis XIV).

More 'traditional' topics are still on offer, but there has been an attempt to broaden them. For example, some exam boards still offer Nazi Germany, while others have put this within a broader time period, such as Germany 1871–1990, hopefully presenting a more rounded view of that nation's history.

The number of exams varies slightly by exam board – both Edexcel and AQA have

three exam papers for the full A-level, whereas OCR has two. The way the exams are structured means it is hard to compare these. However, each exam board will require students to work with primary sources in at least one exam paper; similarly, examining historical interpretations of past events and/or individuals is tackled in one of the papers. There is still a requirement for essays, allowing students to explore issues in depth.

Students also have the opportunity to carry out their own investigation (for 20 per cent of the final grade). In most cases this allows students to explore an issue of personal interest, and engage with primary and/or secondary sources. Typically this piece of work will be between 3,000 and 4,000 words – an ideal preparation for the type of work expected at university.

When taught well, school history is a dynamic, exciting and fascinating subject to study. There are plenty of opportunities for students to visit sites of interest, engage in debate, be creative and appreciate the value and relevance of the subject. ■

**Dr Richard Harris** is associate professor in history education, University of Reading

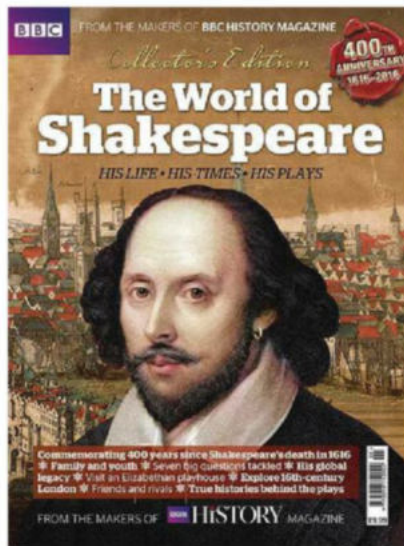
Universities see history as a good all-round qualification and indicator of potential



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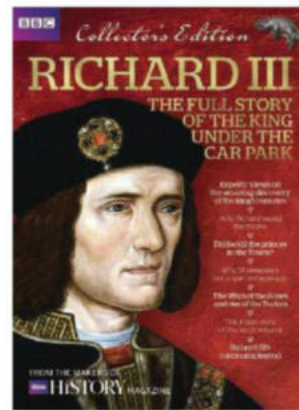
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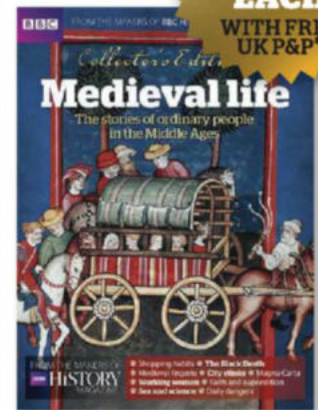
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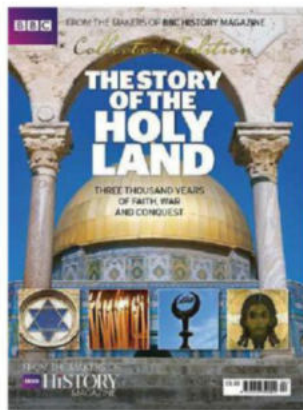
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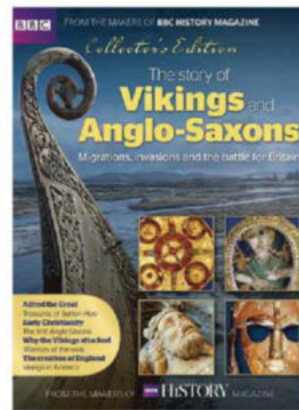
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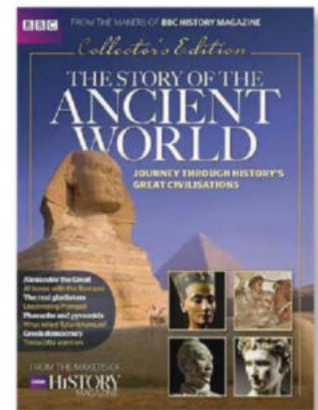
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# Find a degree course that's right for YOU



There's a huge range of history courses on offer. Admissions tutor **Jacob Norris** offers tips to help you choose between them

Working in the library at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Students have been able to study there since its foundation in 1517

**S**o you've decided to study history at university. How do you know which degree is right for you? According to the *Complete University Guide*, 95 UK universities now teach history, offering a bewildering array of options.

From Aberdeen to Bournemouth, and from Bangor to Canterbury, history degrees come in all shapes and sizes. Though there are plenty of non-academic factors to consider, I am going to focus on key considerations regarding the courses themselves.

First and foremost, you need to look closely at course content because this varies significantly between degrees. "History is the synthesis of all social sciences turned towards the past," wrote French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. Perhaps no other subject contains such a broad array of approaches and methodologies.

Indeed, many historians would take issue with Ladurie, arguing that history isn't a social science at all. When it comes down to it, history is simply the study of the past, meaning that any aspect of past experience

can be examined. It's worth reflecting on what interests you most about the past. Is it politics, war, gender, environment, ideas, culture, everyday life? To which time periods and geographical areas are you drawn?

Though you don't necessarily need to have fixed answers to these questions now, you should be aware how differences in approach can be reflected in academic departments. Most departments try to cover a range of interests but inevitably they gain reputations in certain areas. For example, the university at which I teach – Sussex – has long been known for cultural and social history. Other history departments, such as that at Durham, have large numbers of medieval historians.

Certain universities have particular geographical specialisms. SOAS University of London is a good example, focusing on the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Others, such as Kent and Brunel, are known for military history. This isn't to say that those departments don't teach and research other areas, but their strongest suits tend to influence the make-up of their undergraduate modules.

Another key factor is the size of the department, gauged by the number of faculty members. A small department (under 20 members) will inevitably be more limited in its range, but some students prefer the greater intimacy and sense of community this brings.

## Do your research

The only way to appreciate the differences is to do your own research. Browse websites and look through individual staff profiles to gain a sense of their interests. Look closely at the degree curriculum: how much optional-ity is there in terms of different time periods, geographical range and themes? But browsing websites isn't enough in itself. Send an email to department admissions tutors to ask if they teach particular areas of history – they should be happy to offer more information.

Above all, go to open days and applicant visit days. These give you a chance not only to gauge how much you like the campus but also to ask faculty members and current students questions about course content. From the perspective of an admissions tutor working at such days, you can tell the most





Fascinated by all things medieval? Find a university that specialises in that period

## Differences between departments won't just affect life as an undergraduate, but also what you do afterwards

switched-on students from the questions they ask. "How many contact hours a week are there?" "What's the weighting between coursework and exams?" "What teaching methods do you use?" "Can I take a year abroad as part of the degree?" These are all pertinent questions that will help you decide how suitable for you the degree is.

Most of all, what feeling do you get from the department? Could you picture yourself studying with the lecturers and students with whom you speak? If you find the head of department boring, that's probably a bad sign! Differences between departments won't just affect the next three years of your life as an undergraduate, but also what you do afterwards. The reputation of the university is an important factor in helping you find a job or going on to further study.

Going to a Russell Group university (one of the UK's 24 leading universities) isn't the be-all and end-all. Just as important are the type of skills that you will pick up. Every good history degree will give you general skills of analysis and interpretation that are in high demand in today's workplace. But this can be supplemented by more specific training. Some departments place strong emphasis on public history (York and Royal Holloway being examples) while others such as Sussex have made digital skills an

integral part of their history degrees.

The type of elective modules or pathways on offer can also increase your employability. Is there scope to study a language alongside your main focus on history? Is it even worth considering a joint honours degree? Popular options combine history with a language, politics or English. But certain universities offer unusual combinations that you won't easily find elsewhere.

Whatever your particular interests and needs, it's vital to keep an open mind at this stage. Your studies so far will have exposed you to many of the 'classic' history subjects (Tudors and Nazis spring to mind!) but there is a wealth of new and exciting topics you haven't yet come across. This will be one of the joys of your degree: discovering new areas of history that inspire you to dig ever deeper. At this stage you simply need to reflect in a general sense on what it is about history that makes you tick, and find the course that can best allow you to explore that passion.

As the great Roman historian Livy reminds us: "History is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience." ■

**Dr Jacob Norris** is lecturer in Middle East history and undergraduate admission tutor at the University of Sussex

## CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT COURSE

### 1 STAFF

Do your research on the people who will be teaching you. Look carefully at department websites and individual staff profiles.

### 2 SCOPE OF THE COURSE

Gain a clear sense of the courses, looking at the chronological, geographical and thematic range of modules on offer.

### 3 OPEN DAYS

Go to open days and applicant visit days. Arrive with some key questions in mind.

### 4 GRADE OFFERS

A course may look great - but can you meet the typical grade offer? Some places will be more flexible than others - ask the admissions tutor.

### 5 CONTACT HOURS

How many contact hours will you have each week - the amount of direct contact with tutors? This can differ significantly.

### 6 TEACHING STYLES

What methods are used? Look carefully at the balance between lectures, seminars, individual tutorials and other styles of teaching.



**Do some research before choosing your degree course**

### 7 ASSESSMENT METHOD

In some places exams are the most important component, whereas others place more emphasis on coursework and group projects.

### 8 EMPLOYMENT RECORD

How will the degree help further your career? Statistics on each department's graduate employment record are published as part of the university league tables.



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# So you want to work in history?

Your dream is a career in history. Perhaps you're planning, or are already studying for, a degree in history or a related subject such as archaeology. You'd like to be a museum curator, perhaps; maybe you hope to work on a history magazine or manage a heritage property. But how do you break into such a career? And what would the job be like?

We spoke to eight people whose jobs involve history, to ask them about their roles. What qualifications did they need? What has been their career path so far? What does the future hold? And finally, what tips would they offer to someone who is planning a career in history?

## HERITAGE MANAGER



*I love the fact that it's very diverse. Each year of the 20 that I have worked here has been like a new job*

**NAME** Bernadette Gillow

**JOB TITLE** General manager, Ightham Mote and North Kent

**ORGANISATION** National Trust

I manage the flagship attraction of Ightham Mote, a medieval house, gardens and 200-hectare estate. My portfolio includes 1,000 hectares of countryside, three farms, Old Soar Manor, St John's Jerusalem, Oldbury Iron Age Hill Fort, Coldrum Longbarrow, Cobham Mausoleum, Owletts mansion and 40 estate cottages. I'm responsible for vision, strategy, operations, projects and people.

I was attracted by the pull of the place and its long history, of which I was keen to be a small part. I love the fact that it's very diverse. Each year of the 20 that I have worked here has been like a new job – and a highlight has been project management of the conservation programme that saved the house for the nation. Each day brings something different. Even if a lot of what I do on a day-to-day basis is managerial (admin, finance, human resources and so on), it is within a historic environment.

The stunningly beautiful and fascinating environment that I help to look after is steeped in 700 years of history. I love hearing visitors' reactions (especially children) as they first glimpse Ightham Mote. I work with a great team of people – 33 staff and 500 volunteers – who all love the place.

I studied medieval and modern history at university, after which I volunteered at, then worked for, the National Museum of Labour History in Limehouse, London. I was then assistant curator social history and learning officer at Greenwich Museums, while studying for the Museums Diploma.

My advice for anyone wanting to work in history is to save up so you can spend time volunteering and get a foot in the door. Follow your passion: history is *the* best subject – it is so all-embracing. It is very satisfying and great fun being able to help care for and share real historic sites.



**Bernadette by the gatehouse at Ightham Mote, Kent. She is responsible for a portfolio of National Trust properties**





Nicola (right) at Sudeley Castle, with Ellie Harrison and the Countryfile TV crew

## HISTORIAN AND WRITER

“Writing is a labour of love. If you’re passionate about your subject, it shines through

**NAME** Nicola Tallis

**JOB TITLE** Historian and writer

**ORGANISATION** Independent

I’ve loved history since I was a child – my bedtime stories revolved around King Arthur and the six wives of Henry VIII. I had an endless fascination with the people and intrigues of the past.

My book *Crown of Blood: The Deadly Inheritance of Lady Jane Grey* is to be published by Pegasus in December. There are many ingredients that go into writing a book: meticulous research, which can involve transcribing and translating documents; and trying to piece together the often complex pieces of a jigsaw in order to build up an accurate picture of your subject. The most important factor, however, is enthusiasm: writing is a real labour of love, and if you are passionate about your subject, it shines through.

You never know what you might find. Research can give you the chance to see some great things and meet interesting people. I really appreciate having the opportunity to work with archival material – you’re literally touching the past, and it gives you a wonderful connection with the people about whom you’re writing.

Being a writer/historian was always my dream, but initially I trained as a beauty therapist. I gave it up to go to university to study history when I was 23. Then I threw myself into voluntary roles in the heritage sector, which was valuable experience, while studying at Royal Holloway, University of London, for my MA in public history. I also worked as a researcher and a curator.

I wrote a biography of Lady Jane Grey’s mother in 2014, and sent it to my now literary agent. I’ve been writing ever since, while also doing my PhD. I’d love to continue to write history for the rest of my life, and to encourage as many people as possible to read history – I want to make it accessible.

My advice for a career involving history? Quite simply, work hard! I believe that you can achieve anything you want to when you put your mind to it, so take every opportunity you can to build up your experience.

## MAGAZINE EDITOR

“It’s great to be able to meet and speak to so many amazing historians

**NAME** Rob Attar

**JOB TITLE** Magazine editor

**ORGANISATION** BBC History Magazine

I’ve always loved writing, and journalism seemed like a great way to carry that passion into my professional life. Journalism is a broad field, with people doing a variety of tasks. As an editor, my job is mainly about planning, commissioning and editing content for our print magazine and digital platforms, as well as managing the team and representing our brand. When I started out, though, I was doing more writing and research.

I enjoy the fact that we get to communicate our ideas each month with hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. It’s also great to be able to work with so many amazing historians and bring their research to the public. It is a challenging industry, however. The media is undergoing a period of flux, so we need to constantly adapt to new technologies and the decline of print. Plus, everything we do is in the public domain, so any mistakes, as well as achievements, are there for all to see!

I started out by studying for a history degree and then took a postgraduate course in magazine journalism. I was able to secure a short-term contract on BBC History Magazine, and that later became permanent. I worked my way up until I became editor in 2012.

If you want to work in history, I’d recommend you study it up to at least degree level, if possible, then maintain an active interest while you’re looking for a job in the field: read history books, visit history websites, watch history documentaries. If you can show knowledge and passion in interviews it should serve you well.

Rob’s decision to take a postgraduate course in magazine journalism paid off, and he’s now editor of BBC History Magazine







## MUSEUM CURATOR

**“** *It's a diverse job that involves caring for collections, engaging with communities and creating exhibitions*

**NAME** Stephen Welsh

**JOB TITLE** Museum curator

**ORGANISATION** Manchester Museum

I was inspired to be a museum curator by the rich industrial heritage of my home town of Skelmersdale, frequent visits to Liverpool's world-class museums and galleries, and Ray Harryhausen films!

Being a curator is a wonderfully diverse job that involves caring for collections, engaging with communities, creating exhibitions, and public speaking. I love the opportunities it provides to continually learn new things, express your creativity, and engage with inspiring individuals and groups. The major challenge is how to effectively and appropriately manage wide and varied collections that have specific cultural, conservation, and access needs. These needs change regularly, which makes keeping abreast of the most contemporary developments in the sector crucial.

I studied history at GCSE, and both classical civilisation and medieval history at A-level. At the University of Edinburgh I studied classical archaeology and ancient history, followed by an MA in art gallery

and museum studies at the University of Manchester.

During my postgraduate studies I volunteered at World Museum in Liverpool, helping to prepare objects for a new gallery. The combination of qualifications and voluntary work ensured I was eligible to apply for entry-level museum positions, setting me on the path to my current job.

At some point in the future I would like to pursue a more senior position, perhaps becoming the leader of a small museum or cultural organisation. To achieve this I will continue to seek relevant training opportunities, such as the Clore Leadership Short Course which I completed in 2011 (the Clore Duffield Foundation aims to shape leaders in the cultural and creative sector). I will also pursue opportunities to better understand and meaningfully contribute to the sector; for instance, I am currently a committee



**Stephen (left) sharing parts of the Chinese collection at Manchester Museum with colleagues from Wuhan, China**

member for Heritage Lottery Fund North West and several other museum groups.

Until I secured my first museum post I completed what seemed like innumerable unsuccessful applications. The sector is undeniably competitive, but it's important to remain focused, determined and motivated. A communicable passion for history will see you succeed.



**In her role at Wessex Archaeology, Rachel (above right) encourages educational engagement**

## EDUCATION OFFICER

**“** *My role as a community and education officer involves facilitating engagement in archaeology*

**NAME** Rachel Brown

**JOB TITLE** Senior community and education officer

**ORGANISATION** Wessex Archaeology

The chance to enable others to engage with heritage attracted me to this role. It involves facilitating community and educational engagement in archaeology – from running workshops in schools to working with project managers on tender applications. I enjoy the variety of people and projects.

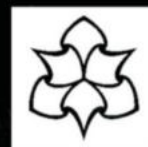
In my career history, I've taken every opportunity to develop skills and gain experience. During and since university I have volunteered for a range of organisations in heritage, education, and health and wellbeing. I graduated from the University of Reading with a BA (Hons) in history. I worked as a teaching assistant and in retail, then undertook a postgraduate certificate in education in history at the University of Bristol. I taught history for two

years in a secondary school and sixth form. Then I moved to the charity sector where I worked for the British Red Cross, which incorporated learning and development and volunteer management. My careers in education and the charity sector were fulfilling and equipped me with skills needed for my current role – as did the experiences I gained through volunteering.

My advice for working in history? Take advantage of any opportunity that offers the chance to work with new people and develop skills. You never know what door could be opened. Volunteering is always good. It helps an organisation; provides the opportunity to develop skills and test a work environment/role; and can open your eyes to roles you didn't know existed.



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*Above all the course was stimulating, interesting and fun, as was studying in Plymouth, and it has also led me to where I am today. I couldn't really ask for much more in a degree course and university experience.'*

Tom Baycock, Plymouth University graduate,  
BA History with International Relations

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destinations have included Rome, Vienna, Paris, Florence and New York City. The research specialisms of the art history team stretch from the Medieval to the Modern era. Major European art historical periods, from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to Realism and Modernism, are a key focus but we also have specialist knowledge in American art of the 19th and 20th centuries.



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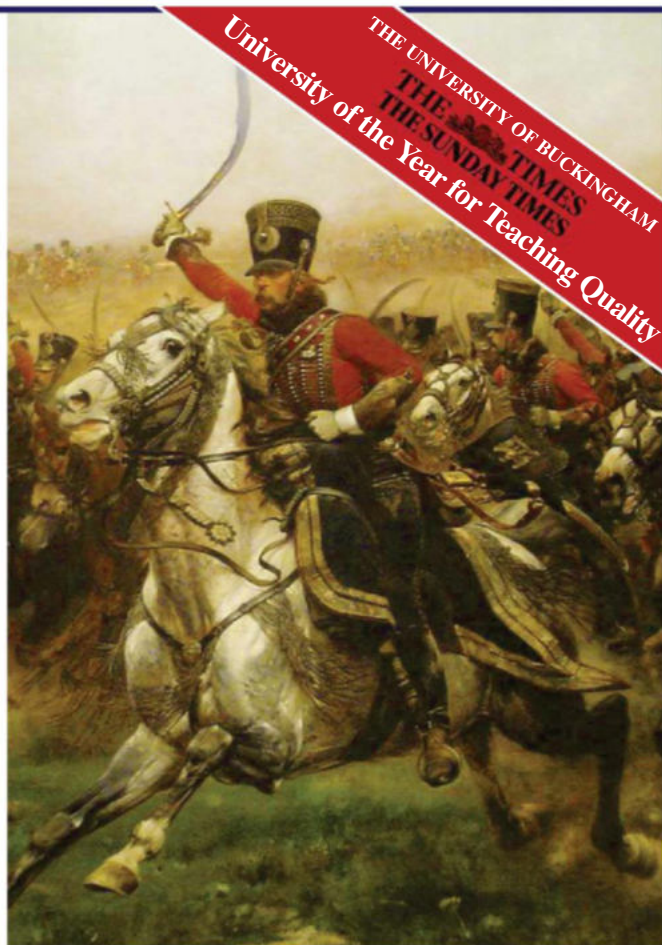
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Neil started with a degree in modern history, and after many years in the public sector is now an architectural historian

## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*The first stages are the most fun – climbing over a building and getting into those parts not usually visible*

**NAME** Neil Burton

**JOB TITLE** Architectural historian and consultant

**ORGANISATION** The Architectural History Practice Ltd

I enjoyed studying history and I liked old buildings. One of my tutors was an architectural historian and convinced me that I could find a job combining both.

My work starts with an initial discussion with the client (an architect, developer, private individual or institution such as the National Trust). Then the main stages are site inspection, research, assessment and report preparation. The first two are the most fun – climbing over a building and getting into parts not usually visible (like the roof space), and carrying out original research in record offices and libraries. Interpreting old buildings through looking at the fabric or at documents gives me a buzz. I'm now a consultant, giving advice based on my experience.

I started out with a degree in modern history, a postgraduate diploma in art history,

25 years in the public sector (Greater London Council and English Heritage), seven years running a preservation society and 15 years in the present job. I've written books and articles along the way and I'm now collaborating on a book about a major country house.

My field has got more professional: there are now several courses in building conservation. A history degree is the best starting point, but employers also look for some knowledge of the building conservation process, which is planning-related. It's a specialised field and very different from academic study because it's about using research for practical applications. University courses are useful, but experience with one of the conservation groups, or any practice dealing with work on old buildings, is helpful.

## RECORD SPECIALIST

*The passion of my colleagues – and how that can inspire audiences and visitors – is always pleasing*

**NAME** Simon Demissie

**JOB TITLE** Head of Social, Economic and Political Records

**ORGANISATION** The National Archives

I've long had a fascination with history. What strikes you at a place like the National Archives is how that's a shared passion across the organisation. Working here appealed to me because I wanted to learn more about the collection and to understand how it will change as we receive more digital records.

My job entails assisting researchers, whether in the reading rooms or via email or phone. We look to engage with academia in collaborative projects, and to deliver our own research via conference papers or journal articles. We try to represent records in new ways, by developing web resources – even using gaming to showcase material.

I'm involved in the release of government records (limited by the law known as the 30-year rule, soon reducing to 20 years). We have a brief glimpse of them before they're released, and it has been fascinating to read the discussions about major 1980s events such as the Brixton riots, Falklands War and miners' strike. The passion of my colleagues

– and how that can inspire audiences and visitors – is always pleasing. I sat in on a session for school children on the SS *Windrush*, during which my colleagues in our education department did a great job of engaging the children. The audible gasp as a document was unboxed said it all.

Today's main challenge is digital – how best to organise the transfer of digital records from government departments, and how to preserve them. We need to ensure they're presented in the most useful way to users, and to understand how elements of research may change when digital records are more prevalent. It is vital we bring staff, academia and public with us as changes occur.

I studied history at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Following some jobs within government I joined the National Archives working on the UK Government Web Archive. I was able to use my academic and employment experiences to gain a role as a records



A history degree led Simon into a career as a records specialist, and to his current role at The National Archives

specialist, with a particular interest in digital records, before progressing to my current role. For the future, there are many opportunities here to develop both knowledge and skills.

For a career in history, I'd say enjoyment is the main thing: make sure you're pursuing routes that really interest you. Be prepared to push yourself out of your comfort zone – and also to pick up on new techniques.





## ACADEMIC / FILM ADVISOR

**“** If academics are not aiming to push the boundaries of scholarship then we are probably in the wrong profession

**NAME** Hannah Greig

**JOB TITLE** Senior lecturer in history, Centre for 18th-Century Studies and Department of History

**ORGANISATION** University of York

I never planned to become a historian. As a teenager I wanted to be a paediatrician, but then at the last minute decided to apply for a history degree. Once I started researching my undergraduate dissertation I became completely hooked on historical research. I'd always loved stories and I became spellbound by the accounts of people whose lives were hidden in archives, waiting to be discovered in boxes of letters or in bundles of old newspapers, cracking and dusty with age.

Most of my time is divided between teaching, research and writing. I supervise PhD students and teach 18th-century history to MA students and undergraduates. I also give public lectures and contribute to television and radio broadcasts. Research and writing are essential parts of academic life, and as part of my job I have the privilege of periods of sabbatical leave from teaching so that I can concentrate on the production and publication of books and articles.

When I'm busy with research I'll usually be in an archive, studying original 18th-century documents, and I like to write at home, at my desk, in complete silence.

Another very rewarding part of my current working life is acting as a consultant to period film, television and theatre productions, so I might also be reading scripts or responding to enquiries from casts and crews working on period productions. I worked on the feature film *The Duchess* and the BBC mini-series *Death Comes to Pemberley*. I'm currently working on the BBC series *Poldark* – and no, I'm afraid I can't divulge what happens next!

The things that I love best about my job are the variety and the creative challenges. The intellectual demands of teaching, writing and consulting are all very different. For example, planning a lecture that will hold my students' attention for an hour, or designing seminars that will generate stimulating discussions for up to three hours, require

particular skills, and I try to keep improving my teaching year on year. Working on a film or television production happens at a very different pace and I have to deliver expert knowledge as immediately and accessibly as possible.

The process of detailed academic research is far more methodical. Completing a PhD takes at least three years full time, and writing a specialist academic book (a monograph) usually takes as long again. I am just at the beginning of researching a new book, and I don't expect to have finished researching and writing it until 2019 at the earliest. To some this might seem long and laboured, but original research is the essence of academic life. If we are not aiming to push the boundaries of scholarship then we are probably in the wrong profession.

In addition to that type of research, I might also be involved in other writing projects that have a faster turnaround – such as essays in collections that represent collaborations between scholars, or short articles for magazines. This, again, requires a different pace, a different set of intellectual challenges and a different way of working.

My career has followed a fairly traditional academic trajectory. After studying for a BA in history at Bristol, I moved to London to study for an MA and then a PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London. I went from there into postdoctoral research fellowships in London, at Yale and at Balliol College Oxford before moving to York to take up a lectureship in the history department.

This is not a career path that I'd ever envisaged or had any prior knowledge about (and it certainly wasn't one that ever cropped up on the results of my school careers questionnaires!) But once I was on it I knew I wanted to see where it could take me. I feel inordinately privileged to

**Aidan Turner in *Poldark*. Hannah's knowledge of the 18th century led to her role as an advisor on the BBC drama**



Hannah on the set of the BBC mini-series *Death Comes to Pemberley*

be in a job that gives me such intellectual rewards and variety.

As far as the future is concerned, I hope that my university role will continue to sustain my intellectual interests and ambitions, and that I will finish my career as a university professor, with an appropriate catalogue of research and publications behind me to represent a career well spent.

I believe it is important for us to value knowledge and expertise, both of which require academics to focus on particular fields of scholarship. Every month, every term and every year of my career so far has been different from what has come before, and this is how I would like it to continue.

If I was giving advice to someone planning a history-related career, I'd say: do what you love. Study a subject because it fascinates you, not because you think it is the 'right' thing to do. If you are motivated to learn because you love what you are doing, then you are more likely to succeed, and success will bring its opportunities and choices. If you love history, read about it, learn about it, follow your own interests, ask questions, and give yourself time to think about it.

If you can become a good thinker, you can pretty much achieve anything you want to: be a writer, an academic, a teacher, a politician, an actor or anything else. ■

### DISCOVER MORE

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#### MAGAZINE

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